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І МІЖНАРОДНОЇ НАУКОВО-ПРАКТИЧНОЇ КОНФЕРЕНЦІЇ

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THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES IN THE CONTEXT OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND EMPLOYEE CREATIVITY

Introduction

As the world faces climate to environment, human life and well-being, in 2015 the United Nations adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals [23], which aim to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs [22]. Sustainable development has become synonymous with sustainability, which in the broadest sense is not just a national priority and can only be achieved when governments, private business and individuals join forces. While the adoption of sustainability practices in business has so far been voluntary and largely driven by the need to ensure a reputation as a socially responsible company, the European Commission adopted the *Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive* (CSRD) in 2022 and the *European Sustainability Reporting Standards* (ESRS) in 2023, which require detailed disclosure of sustainability topics for large companies from the 2024 financial year, and later for small and medium enterprises. This means that the implementation of sustainability practices becomes mandatory and binding for businesses.

Given the importance of the objectives and the inevitable integration of the field into the activities of industrial companies, the question arises as to how sustainability practices are being implemented in businesses and whether they are harnessing the creativity of employees. It is also relevant to analyse the topic of employee creativity from a communication science perspective, to identify how organisations communicate to embed employee creativity in their organisational culture, and which communication model works most effectively within an organisation to encourage employees to develop and implement new ideas related to the implementation of sustainability practices. Finally, the study aims to identify whether sustainability initiatives in businesses are becoming part of the organisational culture and whether the employees of the companies are implementing them with a conscious understanding of their meaning and implications. All of these components – organisational culture, employee creativity and its expression, sustainability – are linked by communication, which involves not only empowering and engaging employees, but also, in a sense, the communicative aspect of management, which

manages employees' creative expression. Therefore, the topic is relevant to the new theoretical insights and empirical research findings that can be applied in practice.

The scientific problem of the paper is the lack of research on the relationship between the applied communication tools and models and the organisational culture and employee creativity in the implementation of sustainability practices in industrial companies. The research aims to investigate how to manage communication in industrial companies in order to maintain an effective organisational culture, creative expression of employees and the implementation of conscious sustainability practices, and how these areas interact to create a more sustainable and innovative business environment.

The research focuses on industrial corporate communication, including organisational culture, employee creativity and its expression, and sustainability practices. The aim of the study is to develop a communication model for industrial companies that supports organisational culture and employee creative expression through the conscious implementation of sustainability practices.

Literature review

The ability to communicate and build relationships both within an organisation and in society can be a key to corporate success [15], so communication is used as a tool to transmit information and receive knowledge, while ensuring effective collaboration between members of the organisation and between the organisation and its external target groups. In the context of organisational culture, employee creativity and sustainability practices in organisations, internal communication is key to effectively embedding the organisation's value system, ensuring that employees are aware of the organisation's key goals and priorities and identify with them [18], to encourage or manage creativity and to communicate about sustainability issues. According to Fitzpatrick [9], internal communication within an organisation ensures compliance with legal requirements, helps to build a community of organisational members, defines the roles and responsibilities of employees in achieving the organisation's goals, promotes support for change within the organisation, and at the same time prepares employees to represent the organisation in an external context.

Communication about the organisational culture and its elements creates the preconditions for employees to identify with the organisation and to be oriented towards common goals. Organisational culture itself can influence communication and its organisation: the process of information sharing, decision-making, the choice of communication channels, the tone of communication [16]. An organisational culture that values sustainability fosters a sense of responsibility among employees to work together with their team to achieve common goals, meet environmental and social responsibility commitments, and at the same time enhances a positive employer brand image [14]. In addition, an organisational culture that supports sustainability fosters organisational innovation and creativity and, conversely, sustainability as an important part of the business can foster an innovative organisational culture [6].

Given that sustainability is becoming one of the strategic focuses of an organisation and a prerequisite for enhancing competitive advantage [3], the

organisational context and culture becomes crucial for the effective implementation of sustainability initiatives [8] and for the resilience of organisations in a time of highly rapid change [6]. Incorporating sustainability in a broad sense into an organisation's philosophy, as a vision and mission [12], value system can influence the overall culture of the organisation and the embedding of this theme in all aspects of business operations, from decision-making to process improvement and product development [3; 14].

By shaping the social context, communication develops the organization's immeasurable capital – creativity [17]. The promotion or management of creativity is inseparable from strategic communication, which aims to mobilise creative employees by clearly defining creativity goals and motives. The right leadership style unleashes the potential for creativity, especially in small companies [25], and managers in the organisation need to manage resources and time for creative activities, direct employees' creative efforts to achieve the organisation's vision, and create conditions of comfort for the realisation of creative ideas [17]. The supportive communication of organisational leaders, with openness, empathy, and understanding as key elements, influences employee engagement [24].

A. Caldeira [4] proposes that, in order to ensure a healthier and more creative work environment, it is necessary to take into account: 1) intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, which depends on the emotional, mental and physical well-being of employees, and which encourages them to engage in activities for the sake of enjoying them; 2) the meaningfulness of the activity; 3) the commitment to the organisation's goals; 4) self-awareness, to discover one's role as an employee and its meaning at work. The level of self-awareness and the assessment of creative and professional expression can be a tool to measure the achievements of organisational culture communication, which are important for employee engagement.

An employee-centred operating model, with feedback on performance from the line manager, will be successful if employees are properly informed. Communication must not only ensure a consistent flow of information, but also appeal to understanding and feelings through the messages it delivers, and at the same time encourage action [9; 20].

Sustainability communication is the deliberate integration of sustainability into the communication process, informing internal audiences about the company's sustainability goals, practices, outcomes and progress. Communicating corporate sustainability themes is a long-term process, which usually includes *Awareness*, *Knowledge*, *Commitment* and *Action* phases [8]. Successful implementation of sustainability practices in business enterprises requires effective and regular communication, including training and encouraging target groups to engage in sustainability initiatives [11], to change behaviour to more sustainable ones, and to find ways to ensure a dialogue on sustainability issues.

E. M. Eisenberg et al. [7] claims that organisational communication can be of several types: communication as a means of information transfer, a transactional process, a tool for strategic control and a tool for balancing creativity and constraints. These types are essentially intertwined in organisations and each is applicable in

different contexts, including the relationship between creativity, organisational culture and sustainability.

Summarising the theoretical material, it is possible to construct a model (Figure 1) in which the role of organisational culture and employee creativity in the implementation of sustainability practices is linked to communication. It is an important tool for communicating information and promoting understanding, engaging employees through favourability and commitment. The combination and synergy of all these elements fosters the creative expression of employees, which at the same time has an impact on both organisational culture and sustainability. As a feedback loop, the model seeks to ensure that sustainability is embedded as part of the organisational culture through communication tools, and is repeated cyclically through the creative expression of employees.

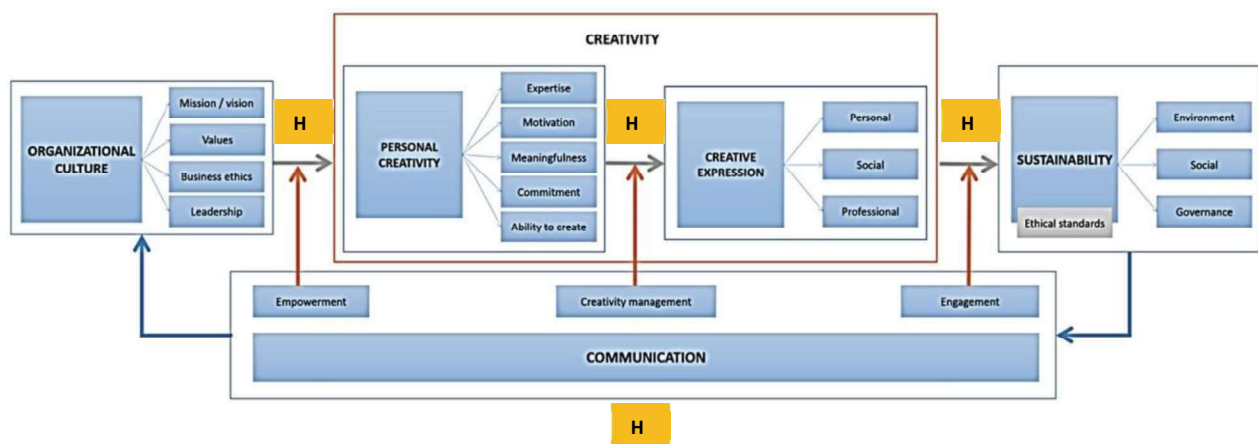


Figure 1: A theoretical model of communication including organisational culture, employee creativity and sustainability practices. Source: compiled by the author based on theoretical assumptions

Based on theoretical studies and model that is presented, the research hypotheses is as follows:

H1: Empowering communication of organisational culture fosters employee creativity.

H2: Managing creativity through communication in an organisation is important for the creative expression of employees.

H3: Engaging organisational communication influences employees' creative expression in implementing sustainability practices.

H4: Employees' creative expression leads to the conscious integration of sustainability practices into the organisational culture.

Research Methodology

The aim of the quantitative study was to empirically assess the opinion of Lithuanian industrial companies' representatives on communication and to identify its links with organisational culture, promotion or management of individual creativity and employee involvement in the implementation of sustainability practices. The study sample was 164 representatives of Lithuanian industrial companies. According to the distribution of responses, the typical respondent is a male aged 30-49 with a university degree, 4-9 years' experience in a large engineering company in a

metropolitan area, and a skilled professional position. Data was collected through a questionnaire and measured using a five-point Likert scale. The quantitative research instrument was based on theoretical assumptions and takes into account scales developed by researchers to measure creativity and social organisational factors [1; 21; 26]. The questionnaire consists blocks of statements, which are divided into several parts: the concept of creativity, sustainability goals and implementation of practices, individual creativity of employees, organisational culture, fostering and managing the expression of creativity, and communication within the organisation.

The reliability and validity of the research data were verified using Cronbach's Alpha, which was followed by the testing of the data's validity using the product-moment Pearson correlations. In order to answer the research questions and hypotheses about the role of communication in organisational culture, employee creativity and its expression in the implementation of sustainability practices, a correlation regression analysis was performed to test the relationships between the statements of each block of questions and the average value of the block of communication statements, as well as the correlations between all statements. Furthermore, the factor analysis technique was employed to analyze the pattern of the relationships between variables. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure was used to check whether the variables – the statements used in the survey – were suitable for factor analysis. Since the result of 0.922 is more than 0.5, the factor analysis is considered acceptable [5].

Findings and modeling

The quantitative study shows that, while industrial companies' representatives have a positive view of their creative and professional competences, they tend to align personal and organisational goals and feel responsible for contributing to the achievement of common goals through their ideas and work. On the other hand, although organisations encourage collaboration and provide opportunities for the expression of ideas, creativity is not seen as a value in the organisation and the reward system does not encourage the initial development of ideas, but rather their implementation and the achievement of results. The role of managers is important for creative expression, as employees expect recognition from top management and seek regular feedback from line managers, who can not only assess performance but also guide them on where they need to be involved. Respondents also tend to share creative ideas and suggestions with line managers or by using digital tools. Regular communication and access to information ensure that employees have the knowledge and competences to perform their job functions, but this does not translate into active engagement and a consistent understanding of the organisation's strategy or organisational culture. Most industrial companies are at the crossroads of empowering and engaging communication, where information is understood, commitment is made, but there is not much active engagement. Employees understand the importance of creativity in the organisation's activities, while at the same time accepting that employees could actively engage in sustainability practices through their ideas.

Pearson correlation analysis showed that communication has a statistically significant and positive relationship with all the dimensions studied – organisational culture, employee creativity and sustainability. The strongest positive correlation is between organisational culture and creativity management (0.830), a very strong correlation is between organisational culture and communication (0.779), and the weakest correlation is between creativity and communication (0.597), although it is still statistically significant.

The juxtaposition of the strongest communication statements in the correlation regression analysis shows that communication can be seen as a link between the creativity of the employees and the core elements of the organisational culture, leading to an alignment between the employees' personal and the organisation's goals. The relationship between creativity and organisational culture is also influenced by certain organisational principles, such as the provision of tools for professional development, the organisation of work, the allocation of tasks that stimulate development and unlock potential and the opportunity to work on important projects, the embedding of ethical standards, and the incorporation of creativity into the organisation's value system.

The role of communication in the expression of creativity through creativity promotion and management tools is most closely linked to feedback from line managers and work organisation principles, providing the necessary tools for upskilling, allocating sufficient time not only for direct work tasks but also for the generation of creative ideas, and linking the reward system to the promotion of creativity. The development of creativity also depends on the alignment of employees' personal and organisational goals, and on clear procedures for collecting and processing creative ideas.

When looking at the impact of communication on the relationship between sustainability and creativity, it can be seen that the process is centred on ensuring knowledge and understanding of sustainability objectives, measures and meaning, which leads to employees becoming more aware of their own personal goals and those of the organisation, and contributing to the achievement of common goals through their own work and that of the team. Providing the necessary tools, regular communication and, in particular, the involvement of managers in communication activities, encourages employees to be creative, to share ideas and to get involved in the implementation of sustainability practices.

At the level of organisational culture and sustainability, the role of communication can be seen through ensuring awareness of the organisation's philosophy, which is directly linked to the knowledge and understanding of sustainability objectives, meaning and activities. It is suggested that, together with clear ethical standards, regular communication and managerial involvement can integrate sustainability into the company's culture and operations.

Factor analysis was carried out to find out the thematic clusters based on the correlation of the statements of the thematic blocks and identified 8 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 that explain 70.991% of the total variance of the variables. The statements and their values have been grouped according to their significance

and content, identifying common aspects and their interrelationships. Factors are assigned values: 1) integration, 2) creativity expression, 3) sustainability communication, 4) empowerment, 5) professional expression, 6) creativity management, 7) motivation, 8) operational principles.

Taking all eight factors together, 14 statements are repeated in two or more factors, indicating the interrelationship between the factors and the influence of the positive or negative meaning of the statements on a given domain. Summarising the recurring statements of the factors at their level, some of them have similar meanings. For example, the statement on sufficient information for job functions in the three factors of sustainability communication, professional expression and empowerment has similar values (0.302 - 0.449), while the statement on organisational leadership in the factors of motivation and operating principles has insignificant values of 0.274 and 0.279. On the other hand, a large proportion of the repetitive statements have contrasting or opposite values, which may indicate that despite the integration of a statement in one area, it may not be sufficient in another. For example, the statement on the alignment of personal and organisational goals in the Integration and Empowerment factors has correspondingly positive values of 0.730 and 0.321, but in the Professional Expression factor has a negative value of -0.333. Given the strong correlation of this statement with the mean value of the Communication statements block of the survey (0.605), it is considered that, in order to achieve professional expression, communication promoting commitment to organisational goals should be strengthened. Correspondingly, with positive contrasting values, it can be assumed that, for example, the strong relationship (0.705) of the statement on the public recognition of innovative employees by the top managers of the company is significantly expressed in the Integration factor, but could be strengthened in the area of creativity management due to its low positive value (0.231). In this way, and given the strong correlation of virtually all the statements with the communication block of statements, it can be stated that the communication tools should include the following aspects to be strengthened: motivation, alignment of personal and organizational goals, recognition of creative employees, integration of sustainability into organizational philosophy, ensuring equal opportunities for creativity and engagement, meaningfulness of sustainability practices and employee involvement.

Taking into account the recurrence of the factor domains and statements and the aspects to be improved, a communication model can be developed that reflects the empirical findings. In the model shown in Figure 2, three levels can be distinguished: organisational, communication and personal.

The organisational level includes factors of performance principles and motivation, which can be classified under the themes of organisational culture, as they include aspects of leadership, self-awareness, as well as free and open communication. This level includes the communication factors, which are intertwined with management and communication elements to achieve employee engagement. Communication level is designed to ensure an efficient flow of information and to connect the elements of the organisation level. This level is closely linked to the

theoretical model, as it consists of the key communication stages for employee engagement: knowledge, understanding, commitment and engagement.

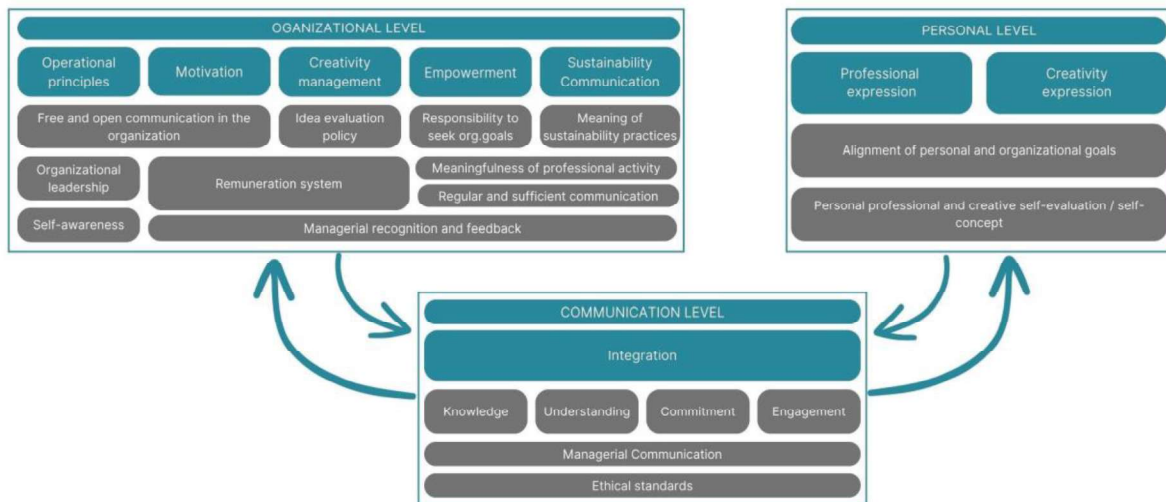


Figure 2: Model based on empirical data of the study. Source: compiled by the author.

The final result in the organisation's activities, combining communication with the elements of the organisational level, is achieved in the personal level, where employees are expected to express themselves professionally and creatively. Important horizontal principles for both types of expression are personal self-awareness and the alignment of individual and organisational goals, as well as a strong commitment to action. According to the theoretical data, communication in organisations is reciprocal, but according to the empirical data obtained, at the level of repetitive statements, there is no strong relationship with the Integration factor in the Creative Expression domain, and in the Professional Expression domain, which may indicate that the dimension is not expressed or satisfied. On the other hand, the Integration factor itself has a strong relationship with virtually all of the statements, suggesting that the Communication dimensions may combine not only elements from the organisational stratum that influence employees' professional and creative expression, but also aspects from the personal level in order to make individual expression meaningful to the organisational level. The professional and creative expression that emerges in the personal level can therefore be said to feed back into the organisational level, while the communication level is the connecting element between the two.

Discussion and recommendations

The study on the three dimensions of organisational culture, creativity and sustainability, as well as both theoretical and empirical models highlight aspects of free and open communication, the role of managers in communication and meaningfulness. As the previous research shows [2; 27], open communication, which is prevalent in organisations, promotes employee engagement and creativity, and managers can not only define formal work rules or principles, but also define the vision to be achieved, direct employees' efforts in the right direction, and provide feedback [16; 17]. In addition, managers also play an important role in the processes

of creating and maintaining organisational culture. The study confirmed the theoretical claims that it is important for employees to know information about the organisation's goals and the meaning of work, and to find their place in the production process and in the organisation. Targeted information not only promotes employees' awareness but also their understanding of the information and subsequently influences commitment and engagement [9; 10; 20].

The study confirmed previous research [13; 19] and found that representatives of the industrial companies primarily share their creative ideas with their line managers, which may be explained by the nature of the work of the companies in this sector and the working principles. However, this also implies trust in their line managers, which again can be generated through communication and organisational culture.

Comparing the theoretical and empirical models, the theoretical model has a more linear separation of these dimensions, embedding employee creativity between organisational culture and sustainability practices. In contrast, in the empirical model, the creative expression of employees is expressed more closely with professional expression through personal self-awareness and the identification of personal and organisational goals. On the other hand, the sustainability dimension in the empirically based model, together with the associated communication, is more integrated at the organisational level, whereas in the theoretical model it is more of a prerequisite for the strategic infusion of the theme into the organisational culture.

The study confirms the hypotheses, since the importance of communication in empowering employees is seen through the presentation and reinforcement of elements of the organisation's culture, while the alignment of personal and organisational goals leads to creative and therefore professional expression. Although the correlation analysis does not show a strong link between self-awareness of professional skills and creative expression or sustainability initiatives, professional self-awareness and expression are quite prominent in the factors highlighted by the factor analysis through perceptions of meaning and purpose. Therefore, it can be said that the personal background aspects – creative and professional expression – are combined, but from the perspective of the scientific debate, it remains an open question to what extent organisational culture influences creativity and to what extent professional expression. The study showed that providing the right tools, regular communication and especially the involvement of managers in communication activities encourages employees to be creative, share ideas and engage in the implementation of sustainability practices and the embedding of sustainability themes in the organisational culture and value system.

Based on the research data and the models developed, the following recommendations are made for communication in the industrial companies:

1) To ensure the sustainability of the creative expression of employees in the implementation of the practices, the planning and implementation of communication must include empowerment and engagement phases, which include: a) informing members about the organisation's culture and activities, and providing regular access to relevant information, b) promoting understanding of the role of each employee's

work and creative ideas in achieving common goals, the meaning of the organisation's and sustainability goals and practices, and the relevance of professional expression to results, c) achieving commitment through the alignment of personal and organisational goals and a sense of responsibility, and finally, d) seeking engagement – professional and creative expression around sustainability practices.

2) Strengthen communication between managers at all levels. It is necessary to allocate communication responsibilities between different levels of management – strategic communication to top managers, and ongoing, feedback and trust-based communication to line managers of teams.

3) Communication on sustainability should be more explicit about sustainability areas, measures, outcomes and targeting. Sustainability communication should be based on communicating the meaningfulness of the practices, the understanding of their benefits and the links to the organisation's activities and the possible changes for each employee.

4) To encourage employee involvement in sustainability initiatives, creativity must be integrated into the organisation's culture and value system through symbols, rituals, heroes, shared traditions, etc.

5) To encourage employees to share creative ideas, a variety of communication channels should be ensured. Formal ways of presenting and processing ideas should be combined with informal ones.

6) Ensuring regular communication through channels accessible to all employees, taking into account the information needs, different age and seniority groups. Encourage employee feedback and involvement in communication.

7) Given the relevance of ethical principles to the cultural and sustainability dimensions of the organisation, it is necessary to clearly define the ethical standards of the organisation and communicate them to the employees, basing the activities of the organisation and of each of its members on ethical principles.

Conclusions

1. The literature review examined the concepts of creativity, organisational culture, sustainability and communication and their interrelationships. The concepts contain overlapping elements, such as effective and regular communication to foster creativity, build and maintain organisational culture and implement sustainability practices; the role of managers and leadership in the organisation; and the engagement of the organisation's employees.

2. Regression correlation analysis of quantitative study showed the strongest positive correlation between organisational culture and creativity management, strong positive correlation is between organisational culture and communication, and the weakest, although still statistically significant, correlation is between creativity and communication.

3. The factor analysis of the study identified eight factors: integration, creativity expression, sustainability communication, empowerment, professional expression, creativity management, motivation, and operating principles. The strongest links between many of the survey statements are found in the integration factor, which brings together all areas of the organisation and employees. 14 statements are

repeated in several different factors, indicating the interconnectedness of the factors and the influence of the statements' positive or negative implications on a specific area. The recurring statements and their meanings identify aspects of communication that need to be strengthened, which relate to employee motivation, creativity management, empowerment, professional expression, and at the same time correspond to the operational principles and sustainability communication.

4. The model developed from the empirical data includes organisational, communication and personal levels. The organisation level is like a foundation for all activities and comprises five key elements: operating principles, motivation, creativity management, empowerment and sustainability communication. The communication level is designed to ensure an efficient flow of information and to bring together the elements of the organisation level. The end result in the organisation's performance, combining communication with the elements of the organisation layer, is achieved in the personal level, where employees are expected to express themselves professionally and creatively.

5. Comparing the theoretical and the empirical models, it was found that in both models communication is the link between the three dimensions analysed – organisational culture, employee creativity and its expression, and sustainability. While in the theoretical model these dimensions are separated in a more linear way, by embedding employee creativity between organisational culture and sustainability practices, in the empirically based model employee creative expression is more strongly expressed alongside professional expression through personal self-awareness and the identification of personal and organisational goals. Also, the sustainability dimension in the empirically based model, together with the associated communication, is more integrated at the organisational level, whereas in the theoretical model it is more of a prerequisite for the strategic infusion of the theme into the organisational culture.

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педагогічних способів і методів допомоги з метою рівноваги психо-емоційного стану. Це можуть бути консультації психолога, проведення онлайн-тренінгів, відвідування хабів з надання психологічної допомоги, вправи на подолання тривожності та стресу.

У зв'язку з інтенсивною міграцією українського суспільства за кордон досить актуальною є проблема адаптації студентів до життя й навчання в іншій країні з метою збереження їхнього психологічного здоров'я: здатність долати стресові ситуації і депресії, усвідомлення наявності цілей і шляхів їх досягнення, перспектив, можливостей особистісного зростання.

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