

CURRENT ASPECTS IN APPROACHING ORGANIZATIONAL STRESS

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Abstract: Everyone experiences stress (Seyle said that there is no life without stress). As a counselor would explain the problems of stress, a small dose "of stress is essential for a healthy life and efficiency. However, when stress erodes the functioning of the body, the sources of stress must be eliminated or reduced. Occupational stress as the late declared disease, should be adopted legal framework and measures to optimize the application of occupational health policies. Expected effects of such measures: reducing organizational stress and negative influences on the most important resource of any organization-man, reducing costs psychological, social and financial guidance for occupational health in terms of organizational stress and its effects, increasing organizational performance as a direct consequence reduction in stress management time devoted to organizational costs, redirecting funds national and organizational costs devoured organizational stress to other areas of interest, growth of labor productivity and thus GDP, increasing the satisfaction from jobs and reducing migration of staff, extension life of the population by reducing direct and indirect effects of Stress on organizational health.

Cuvinte cheie: stress, resurse, stare de sănătate

Rezumat: Toata lumea experimenteaza stresul (Seyle afirma ca „nu exista viata fara stres). Asa cum ar explica un consilier in problematica stresului, o mica „doza” de stres este esentiala pentru o viata sanatoasa si eficienta. Cu toate acestea, cand stresul erodeaza buna functionare a organismului, sursele stresului trebuie eliminate sau reduce. Stresul ocupational fiind declarata boala sfarsitului de secol, se impune adoptarea cadrului legislativ si aplicarea unor masuri de optimizare a politicilor de sanatate ocupationala. Efectele scontate ale aplicarii acestor masuri : reducerea stresului organizational si a influentelor nefaste asupra celei mai importante resurse a oricarei organizatii- omul; diminuarea costurilor psihologice, sociale si financiare destinate sanatatii ocupationale la capitolul stresul organizational si efectele sale; cresterea performantelor organizationale ca o consecinta directa a reducerii in timp a cheltuielilor dedicate managementului stresului organizational; reorientarea fondurilor nationale si organizationale devorata de costurile stresului organizational spre alte zone de interes; cresterea productivitatii muncii si implicit a Produsului Intern Brut; cresterea satisfactiei la locurile de munca si reducerea migratiei personalului; prelungirea duratei de viata a populatiei prin diminuarea efectelor directe si indirecte ale stresului organizational asupra starii de sanatate.

SCIENTIFIC ARTICLE OF BIBLIOGRAPHIC SYNTHESIS

In Romania, during transitional years and EU integration, reconsideration of medicine role and place is an imperious need. The appropriation of Frame Decree no. 89/391/89, as of 1996, has broken ground labor medicine and security.

The fields of activity that compose labor medicine are in a continuous development: labor physiology, professional diseases and profession related diseases, labor psychology, medical ergonomics, labor hygiene/ industrial hygiene, health promotion, computer science, statistics, labor medicine management.

The globalization by itself triggers stress. We can identify a directly proportional increase of stress level in relation with the society's evolution towards civilization.

In 1991, the International Labor Office declared that the professional stress is the disease that characterizes the end of the century and it shall be present in every country, affecting all labor levels. A report drafted by the Worldwide Health

Organization identified that by 2020, the stress shall be the main health problem for people in emerging countries.

Why within the last years, such increase into stress level had been identified, as well as the concern related to its negative consequences? There are many reasons, but the changes that occurred into the labor environment and into the society seem to provide us with most of the answers. All of these have led to increase of working time in case of many employees and a constant constraint of spare time. Psychological problems that are coped by those who work into the educational field, health, emergency services, military service, etc, have increased. The labor structure had dramatically changed into the so-called "work for life" and as women and ethnic minorities are getting hired, manpower diversity had increased.

Internationally, the work health aspect has known a revalorization within the last years and the professional stress had become a priority. Recent researches reveal an alarming fact, and that is that the organizational stress is nowadays the second problem related to work health, after the muscular –

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skeletal affections, as 28% of the workers within the European Union, that is over 40 million people are directly affected. Women are more affected by the professional stress than men are.

The common causes include lack of safety at the workplace, lack of control over work and overcharge of activities, as the professional stress is the cause of more than 50% of absenteeism. Work related monotony, very tight due dates (29% of the personnel said that they work in such conditions), an inappropriate treatment at workplace are other factors that cause professional stress.

In addition, the number of persons that suffer from stress, which is caused or aggravated by working conditions, doubled in relation to year 1990. Such alarming statement means that there are costs assessed to more than 20 billion Euros at the level of the European Union, which represent losses into the working time and health costs.(1)

Stress at work is the cause of more than a quarter of the medical rests, of which period means 2 weeks of absence from the workplace at least.(2) The reaction of individuals to stress is different from case to case: some of them smoke more cigarettes, other consume more alcohol or get hooked on narcotic drugs. The psychological effects of stress include family problems, sleep disorders, problems in sexual dynamics, depression, anxiety, burnout. Besides these, the stress may cause considerable disorders into productivity, creativity and competitiveness. Each of us may be the victim of professional stress, irrespective of the field of activity or the size of the company we work for.

Over 4 % of the European workers state that, within the last 12 months, they had been exposed to violence coming from outside of the company they work in, and 9% of them claimed that they had been intimidated at their workplace.

In addition to the negative effects over the economy, we must not forget the human cost of labor related psycho – social risks. It is very well known that such aspects affect the physical and psycho – social health in different ways, from cardio-vascular and gastro-intestinal diseases, hyperglycemia, asthma up to mental health related problems.

- In 2002, the first pan-European campaign dedicated to such a theme was organized and it was the most extensive propagated through media and popular event of the European Agency for Work Health and Security so far carried out. The European Week for Work Health and Security in 2002 related to prevention of psycho – social risks. Such an event was launched on July 2nd, 2002, into the European Parliament, and then extended to the entire Europe, by means of specific programs that were nationally dedicated to the member states.

Prevention of work related stress represents one of the objectives formulated within the European Commission's Handout (3) regarding the new strategy into the field of work health and security. The European Agency for Work Health and Security drafted a series of informative sheets aimed to help in approaching stress at work and its causes. Such informative sheet represents a risk assessment and prevention method that may be applied to stress at work as well as to its causes. The sheet is available to all those who wish to treat the stress related aspect at their workplace.

The stress related to the professional activity occurs when the requirements regarding the work environment exceed the employees' capacity to cope with them or to keep them under control.(4) The pressure may improve performances and bring a certain satisfaction in labor, by reaching the targeted objectives. Nevertheless, when the requirements and pressures exceed certain limits, they lead to stress. And such a situation is

not favorable to the employees as well as to the company.

In normal conditions, people must find their balance and new answers to new situations. Stress is not necessarily a negative phenomenon and it may be considered as faulty to only concentrate over its pathological effects. A moderate stress level may even be an important motivational element or may be an instrument in acquiring a dynamic adjustment to a new situation.

If health is considered as a dynamic balance, stress is just a part of it. There is no health state without interaction with other individuals or environments. It is just the excessive stress that becomes pathologic. This is the reason why some types of stress are normal and necessary, both at workplace as well as outside workplace. If stress is intense, continuous or repeated, then it may become a negative phenomenon, and this may lead to physical sickness and psychological disorders. Within the organizational context, it often triggers inadequate adjustments to certain cases. Reactions to stress are complex, as they may be identified, at physiological, cognitive, emotional and behavioral levels.

In a survey related to stress felt by managers, the following were identified: stressful reactions are developed into the management field on increased intensity, and it spreads on three main directions.

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