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IMPACT OF STRESS REDUCTION ON WORK EFFICIENCY



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Abstract. The article reveals the main aspects of stress in the workplace, its causes and negative consequences, one of which is the labor efficiency reduction; analyzes methods of forming stress-resistant behavior. The use of these methods and techniques by the management of the organization, and other specialists providing psychological assistance in stressful situations, increases the efficiency of work and facilitates the emotional tension of the employees. The final part of the article determines the impact of stress reduction on work efficiency. The author's practical experience in reducing stress in the workplace is described. There were tested 30 people in the company and three-quarters of them indicated regularly stress experience at work. After that measures were taken to improve working conditions and working hours and the number of people experiencing stress decreased tenfold after two months. The author's research has shown that it is possible to increase labor productivity by reducing stress.

Key words: stress; stress prevention; stress management; workplace; work efficiency.

JEL codes: M12; J52.

Introduction

Decreases in efficiency and productivity have recently been associated with stress. It is not surprising as nowadays the stress problem is well known to everyone. Stress is a concept used to characterize various human conditions that arise in response to the extreme influence of internal and external factors. Stress in the workplace has a special effect on work efficiency.

The American National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) defines workplace stress as “harmful emotional and physical reactions caused by work which do not match workers capabilities, resources, or needs” [1]. The Institute estimates that 75% of workers in various fields consider their work to be stressful, while the rest 25% consider their work to be the most stressful factor in their lives [2].

Recent studies have shown that stress in the workplace leads to a significant increase in diseases such as cardiovascular disease and a wide range of mental and physical disorders. The impact of stress on government officials in the UK has shown evidence linking perceptions of workers who are unable to manage their jobs to the likelihood of developing cardiovascular disease. After studying 7000 employees, both men and women, the researchers concluded that middle and lower levels of the hierarchy are more likely to experience feelings of helplessness associated with heart disease. They concluded that “a stronger focus on developing the work environment can be a key way to reduce health problems” [3]. Other studies have found a connection between stress in the workplace and the immune system [4]. These include weakness, high blood pressure, hormonal imbalance, mood swings, acute depression, insomnia, digestive disorders, anxiety, irritability and anger, as well as violence and accidents at work. It is clear that any of these disorders, or a combination of them, can lead to poor quality of work and reduce productivity [5]. Studies were conducted on the impact of stress on the seafarers’ [6], IT specialists’ [7], programmers’ [8] performance, and the number of accidents at work [9].

The purpose of this article is to analyze the causes and consequences of stress in the workplace, methods of stress reduction based on management.

1. Factors contributing to work-related stress

The researchers [1; 10] grouped the causes of stress in the workplace as follows:

- 1) discrimination from the decision-making process and, therefore, a feeling of lack of control in the work place;
- 2) poor communication with insufficient or no feedback on work results;
- 3) lack of clarity regarding the roles’ distribution;
- 4) feelings of the reward system unfairness;
- 5) absence or negativity of social guarantees;
- 6) difficulty in adapting to new technologies;
- 7) constant overtime work or overstrain;
- 8) shift work;
- 9) unsatisfactory or hostile working environment;

10) inadequate decision-making by the management.

Each of these factors has received considerable attention in the literature on stress management, but it should be emphasized that each person reacts differently to different stimuli. It is the responsibility of management to know or assume such factors, to find out if they exist in their organization and to determine the impact they have on employees.

2. Workplace Stress Reduction: Prevention and Mitigation Strategies

Measures should be taken to prevent or mitigate any actual or potential stress factors that could negatively affect the quality of work and productivity. Therefore, in order to identify all the stresses at work and their impact on workers, an organizational stress diagnostic should be performed. This should be a collaborating process, which should be supported by one or more individuals with appropriate training and experience. According to recent research [5], organizations can prevent or significantly reduce stress in the workplace by:

- Creating an optimal stress level in life;
- Development of forms for determining abnormal disorders;
- Detection of the burnout effect;
- Organization of stress monitoring;
- Stress balancing or reduction strategies for different positions or departments;
- Other activities related to the stress index and profile, and recommendations that are considered relevant to the individual characteristics of the organizations.

The most widely used tool for stress determination is the Occupational Stress Index (OSI), which is calculated using six different questionnaires. But they are related to each other focusing on:

- 1) determining the pressure source;
- 2) general models of employees' behavior;
- 3) awareness of the work control level;
- 4) stress management strategies;
- 5) health of the employees;
- 6) job satisfaction.

When the necessary tools are available and organizational stress diagnostics has been carried out, stress reduction measures should be taken and employee stress management skills should be implemented in the company. The specific actions to be taken depend on the results of the stress audit.

3. Work efficiency while reducing stress

To determine the impact of stress reduction in the 'X' company, I conducted a study of the team of 30 people.

For the purpose of the research I conducted a survey of employees about their job satisfaction and current stress situations. The results of the survey were as follows: 12 employees out of 30 were satisfied with their work, 18 employees reported about the existing moments of stress at their workplace.

In order to achieve the study goals, the management of the organization took measures to stabilize the moderation of the work pace and created a positive working atmosphere. 2 breaks each of 15 minutes were included in the working day of the employees.

In 2 months after the introduction of these measures, a survey of employees was conducted again. 24 people out of 30 were satisfied with the work process, 2 people faced stress at the work place during this period.

The following facts were recorded during the research. First of all, when stress is reduced, a more favorable climate in the team is created.

It is important for managers to properly organize the work of their employees. It is necessary to separate responsibilities among the employees of the unit so that everyone is clearly aware of their assignments. People need to be given the opportunity to determine the sequence of their work process.

By stress overcoming employees become more efficient, their productivity and quality of work increase. Reduced stress anxiety and restlessness lead to a focus on a particular task and self-control, and errors occurrence is minimized.

Conclusion

The following conclusion can be drawn from the results of the research and the information analyzed.

Stressful situations certainly affect the health of employees. When stress is reduced, then tension is also reduced, mental state improves, and a person becomes cheerful, more active and sociable.

All of those factors contribute to the improvement of work results and satisfaction in the activities. Absence of stress among employees to a large extent creates the potential to improve the performance of the organization, to achieve its goals and objectives. The atmosphere of the team has a positive impact on the indicators of staff turnover and labor productivity.

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ВЛИЯНИЕ СОКРАЩЕНИЯ СТРЕССА НА ЭФФЕКТИВНОСТЬ ТРУДА

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Аннотация. В статье раскрываются основные аспекты стресса на рабочем месте, его причины и последствия, одним из которых является сокращение эффективности труда; анализируются методы формирования стрессоустойчивого поведения. Использование этих методов и приемов руководством организации, и другими специалистами, оказывающих психологическую помощь в стрессовых ситуациях, повышает эффективность работы, облегчает эмоциональное напряжение работников. В итоговой части статьи определено влияние снижения стресса на эффективность труда. Описан практический опыт автора по снижению стресса на рабочем месте. В компании были протестированы 30 человек, из них три четверти указали, что регулярно испытывают стресс на работе, после чего были предприняты меры по улучшению условий труда и режимов рабочего времени; после двух месяцев число испытывающих стрессы сократилось в десять раз. Авторское исследование показало возможность повышения производительности труда за счет сокращения стресса.

Ключевые слова: стресс; предотвращение стресса; рабочее место; производительность труда; эффективность работы.

JEL коды: M12; J52.

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Контакты

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