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STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING STRESS AND ENHANCING EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract: This article analyzes the theoretical and practical aspects of stress management in modern organizations, the stressors that arise during the work process, and their impact on employee performance. It also outlines strategies aimed at fostering a healthy psychological environment, ensuring the mental stability of employees, increasing work motivation, and mitigating the negative consequences of stress.

Keywords: stress, stress management, organization, employee performance, labor productivity, motivation, psychological environment, management strategy.

INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization and digital transformation, the effectiveness of an organization's operations depends not only on material-technical resources, financial capabilities, and modern technology but also on the rational utilization of human capital. Employees are among the primary strategic resources of any organization. Their professional potential, attitude toward work, psychological state, and level of engagement are critical factors that determine the overall outcomes of an organization. In the modern work environment, factors such as increased workloads, time constraints, high demands, heightened responsibilities, communication gaps between management and staff, and constant change contribute to the emergence of stress. Prolonged stress in the workplace can diminish employees' interest in their work, negatively affect decision-making processes, and lead to a decline in labor productivity.

In its "Guidelines on Mental Health at Work," published in 2022, the World Health Organization identifies several key priorities: protecting mental health in the workplace, mitigating psychological risk factors, developing the managerial competencies of leaders, and providing support to employees [1].

In this context, stress management within organizations should not be viewed merely as a psychological issue, but rather as a vital component of strategic management.

The objective of this research is to identify the primary factors that trigger stress in organizations, analyze their impact on employee performance from a theoretical perspective, and develop effective strategies to enhance labor productivity through stress management. The main objectives of the study are as follows:

- to examine the causes of stress within organizations;
- to analyze the relationship between stress and employee performance;
- to identify modern approaches to stress management;
- to develop recommendations for fostering a healthy psychological environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of stress is a scientific category extensively studied across fields such as psychology, management, physiology, and labor economics. It refers to the adaptive responses of the human organism to external and internal stimuli.

The scientific perspectives of the Canadian scholar Hans Selye play a significant role in the development of stress theory. Selye defined stress as the organism's general adaptive response to various demands and stimuli. His approach serves as an essential theoretical foundation for studying the impact of stress on human activity and health [2].

According to the cognitive appraisal theory developed by Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman, stress depends on how an individual perceives an external situation and evaluates their available resources in relation to it. The authors characterize stress as a process of interaction between the individual and their environment [3]. This approach highlights the necessity, when managing stress within organizations, to take into account employees' individual characteristics, their ability to assess situations, and their adaptive resources.

The "Demands-Control" model, developed by Robert Karasek, serves as a significant theoretical framework for understanding stress in the work process. According to this model, high job demands increase the risk of stress when an employee has limited control over their own work activities [4].

In their 2022 joint recommendations, the World Health Organization and the International Labour Organization emphasized the importance of mitigating psychological risks in the workplace, ensuring the rational distribution of workloads, establishing effective communication with employees, and training managers to provide psychological support [5].

An analysis of these scholarly sources indicates that effective stress management within organizations should not be limited solely to addressing the individual problems of employees. Instead, it requires a comprehensive improvement of the management system, working conditions, corporate culture, and the relationships between managers and staff.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed methods including theoretical analysis, comparative analysis, a systems approach, scientific generalization, and logical analysis to examine issues related to stress management in organizations and the enhancement of employee performance. First, scientific literature regarding the causes of stress and its impact on work performance was examined. Second, recommendations from international organizations concerning the protection of mental health in the workplace were analyzed. Third, organizational strategies aimed at reducing stress and enhancing employee productivity were systematized.

The methodological framework of the study consists of the following approaches:

Systems approach – examining stress within an organization not merely as an individual employee's problem, but as an integrated process linked to management, working conditions, and social relations.

Psychological approach – taking into account employees' individual characteristics, emotional stability, motivation, and capacity to adapt to stress.

Managerial approach – improving leadership styles, the distribution of tasks, work discipline, and internal organizational communication.

Strategic approach – aligning stress management initiatives with the organization's long-term development goals.

As a result of the study, a conceptual approach was developed that integrates both organizational and individual mechanisms for managing stress.

RESULTS

The research and the analysis of scientific sources made it possible to categorize the factors that trigger stress in organizations into several primary groups. The first group consists of organizational factors. This includes an excessive workload, vaguely defined tasks, time constraints, poorly organized work schedules, and management shortcomings.

The second group comprises socio-psychological factors. Conflicts between management and staff, a lack of mutual trust within the team, unfair treatment, and insufficient recognition of work achievements can all lead to increased stress.

The third group involves individual factors. An employee’s experience, professional training, time-management skills, and personal adaptability all influence their stress levels.

According to the analysis, the following strategies are essential for managing stress and enhancing productivity within organizations:

1. Rational distribution of workload. Tasks should be assigned by taking into account each employee's professional capabilities, qualifications, and available working time. Prioritizing tasks and reducing excessive burdens helps prevent stress.
2. Establishing an effective communication system. Open dialogue between management and staff, regular exchange of ideas, and the implementation of feedback mechanisms strengthen trust within the team.
3. Organizing psychological support. It is essential to consider the psychological state of employees, arrange consultations with specialists when necessary, and conduct educational activities focused on mental health.
4. Developing the managerial competencies of leaders. Leaders should possess skills in conflict resolution, active listening, motivating staff, and fostering a healthy team environment.
5. Ensuring a work-life balance. Flexible working arrangements, adherence to designated rest periods, and respect for employees' personal time contribute to maintaining work productivity.

DISCUSSION

The research findings indicate that stress management is a crucial component of effective human resource management within organizations. In modern organizations, in particular, it is important not only to develop employees' professional knowledge and skills but also to ensure their psychological stability.

An effective model for stress management in organizations should encompass preventive, organizational, and individual measures. Preventive measures focus on identifying and eliminating stress-inducing factors in advance.

Organizational measures involve improving working conditions, managing workloads, and refining management systems. Individual measures serve to develop employees' skills in stress management, time planning, and making sound decisions in challenging situations.

Recommendations from the World Health Organization also state that individual stress management training should be implemented in conjunction with organizational changes [1]. Therefore, placing the entire responsibility for stress prevention solely on the employee is not an appropriate approach. Organizational leadership must also create the necessary conditions to foster a healthy work environment.

Furthermore, incentive systems play a significant role in enhancing employee performance. Timely recognition of work outcomes, opportunities for professional development, and fair evaluation mechanisms strengthen employees' commitment to the organization.

The following criteria can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of stress management within organizations:

- the level of employee job satisfaction;
- labor productivity and the quality of task execution;
- trends in absenteeism;
- a reduction in conflicts and misunderstandings within the team;
- employees' desire to continue working for the organization;
- employees' assessment of the psychological climate. Regular monitoring of these indicators enables an organization to identify existing problems and refine its stress management strategies.

At the same time, the effectiveness of stress management programs may vary depending on the organization's field of activity, financial resources, number of employees, and corporate culture. Therefore, it is advisable for each organization to develop a tailored strategic program that takes its specific circumstances into account.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, managing stress and enhancing employee performance within organizations represent a key focus area in modern management. While stress can negatively impact work activities, effective management of it can foster a healthy psychological environment and productive working relationships within an organization.

Based on the research, the following conclusions have been drawn:

First, the primary causes of stress in organizations are linked to increased workloads, ambiguity regarding tasks, communication issues, and the psychological environment.

Second, effective stress management helps support employees' attitudes toward their work, their motivation, and their overall productivity. Thirdly, developing the psychological and communicative competencies of leaders is crucial for fostering a healthy organizational environment.

Fourthly, the fair distribution of workloads, employee motivation, the implementation of flexible work arrangements, and the development of psychological support systems are effective approaches to reducing stress.

Fifthly, stress management should be structured as a continuous process that contributes not merely to an organization's short-term operations, but to its long-term strategic development.

On this basis, it is recommended that organizations develop comprehensive stress management programs and refine management strategies focused on safeguarding employee mental health and developing human capital.

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