

SOURCES OF STRESS AT WORK. A CASE STUDY AT DIMAL SH.P.K ALBANIA

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Abstract: Stress is one of the most used, but also the most unpopular terms nowadays, as it has become part of our lives, bringing various problems. Stress can be defined in several ways. More simply, we can say that it is the exposure to an event that is perceived as threatening to the individual. As such, it affects every area of our lives including work. The object of this paper is focused on stress at work in the company "Dimal Factory Sh.P.K". Being a large company operating in the market, with a relatively small number of employees in the field of tailoring, a sector quite widespread in Albania, but also not a little controversial about the working conditions it offers, makes it more attractive to study the phenomenon of stress and its expression in this organization. Compared to academic knowledge, we are faced with gaps that exist between theory and reality. To highlight these discrepancies and find ways to reduce them, in order for both parties to benefit (staff and organizations), has prompted us to analyze this phenomenon in the aforementioned company. To achieve the goal, quantitative research was used through questionnaires structured according to the Likert scale of evaluation from 1 - 5. The study focuses on the recognition of the phenomenon by the participants, by the organization, as well as the awareness of both parties to treat it more seriously and to find common and effective ways to fight stress even in the conditions of COVID-19.

Keywords: Stress, Strategy, Awareness, Self-Confidence, Technological Development, Communication.

1 INTRODUCTION

The balance between work and life is getting harder and harder, increasing stress levels as well. The words anxiety, stress, pressure, etc., are words that have taken an important place in the vocabulary of our daily lives and are not just words but a condition that we live in almost all of us.

The unstoppable rhythm of life, problems, inefficient communication, ignorance of oneself, clashes with each other, etc. exaggerate this condition.

Increasingly, demands on the individual in the workplace are reflected in the family and social life of employees.

Long working hours and away from home or taking work to do at home, high levels of responsibility, job insecurity and moving from one job to another, can negatively affect family responsibilities and activities at the time of free. This has impaired the good and relaxing quality of life outside of work, which is an important stabilizer to work-induced stress.

Internal pressures such as childcare responsibilities, financial worries, anxiety, and

housing problems can affect a person's resilience at work, as can be seen, stress affects every area of our lives.

The main problem is that not everyone pays due attention, especially in our society where the culture of self-care is not yet at the right level.

In the first place, we must be aware as a society about the phenomenon, to understand it, to accept that it exists, to know its sources, the consequences that can be more than obvious, including ourselves. If we are conscious of all this, then we can take the necessary steps to prevent it.

The study of the phenomenon of stress is important not only for the individual in particular, as familiarity with the phenomenon makes us more alert and more able to deal with it, but also for business as a whole.

Taking into account stress can mark a major turning point in the functioning of the business, in the business-employee relationship, although many businesses can consciously avoid considering this phenomenon, not realizing the indirect losses they cause themselves (Michie, 2002).

1.1 Literature Review

Stress is a condition in changing dynamics that an individual is confronted with as an opportunity, demand or resource related to what the individual wishes and onto which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important (Roblins and Judge, 2017, p.660).

With the development of technological and living conditions, we come under great pressure thus increasing the level of stress.

The feeling of having little or no control over a situation is always disturbing, and that is what stress causes.

The word 'stress' means various things to different people.

Some people define stress as events or situations that cause them to feel tension, pressure, or negative emotions, others see

stress as a reaction to those situations (Hoboubi et al, 2017).

This response includes physiological changes, like increased pulse and muscle tension, similarly as emotional and behavioral changes.

However, stress is taken into account a process that involves a person's interpretation and response to a threatening event.

So, stress in itself could be a term that refers to the sum of physical, mental situations, tensions and emotions on an individual, in addition as reaction to those events that are perceived as threatening (Lussier and Hendon, 2016).

A 2018 study published within the journal Neurology found that stress reduces the brain (Andrews et al. 2018).

Our health will be in danger, given that even our brains can shrink if we are stressed most of the time.

When it's excessive for an extended time, it can change our brain in a very horrible way. Stress can cause headaches, weak stomach, high vital sign, hurting and insomnia.

The study showed that folks with high stress levels did worse on memory tests and their brains were smaller compared to those with lower stress levels.

This contraction of the brain affects the part that's answerable for memory and learning, that the more chronic the strain, the more likely we are to possess an impaired memory and find it difficult to be told new things (Selye, 1976).

1.2 Stress Factors

To understand stress more deeply, we'd like to research it all told its dimensions, to know its causes. Stress isn't just a psychic overload.

There are variety of other factors that cause it, which are classified into:

1. Biological factors, including diseases, pain, high temperature, etc. Also, the harmful effects of microorganisms,

- toxins, allergies and other physical overloads.
2. Chemical factors, including air and environmental pollution with industrial waste, food industry additives, medicines, drugs and various chemicals, cigarette smoke, smog and alcohol.
 3. Physical factors, including attacks on vision like artificial light and pollution: to hearing like, noise; to the senses like vibrations or frost, excessive heat, electromagnetic waves, ultraviolet waves, etc.
 4. Social factors, including job loss, income, etc. (Xinyu Zhou et al. 2017).

1.3 Sources of Stress at Work

Just like in lifestyle, once we had an extended list of sources of stress, there are specific sources at work that cause it. Some people used stress to visit a dominant boss, bad or any unpleasant situation they're subjected to. Stress at work is that the results of employees' interaction with the conditions that surround them, specifically, an employee's stress is that the psychological reaction to events that are seemed to be threatening to him.

Here are the most sources of stress at work:

1. Unrealistic Deadlines / Expectations: When there's a mismatch between opportunities and expectations, it always causes high stress. The worker features a capacity or limit and therefore the pressure to try and do the impossible isn't good.

This kind of situation will be extremely stressful for a worker. It's typically the worker who is accountable, instead of considering whether deadlines or expectations must be adjusted.

2. There is no chance of advancement / career: especially when you try to find an organization with which to stay longer and grow, not finding such an environment is a challenge and especially or once you make an effort and

give yourself a part of you, but knowing that you're just not there certainly causes stress.

3. Conflict / Relationships with colleagues: There are many reasons that conflict can occur within the workplace. Conflict usually occurs as a result of an organization having a culture of blame.

During this environment, most are scared of punishment, so nobody will admit it once they make a blunder.

Instead, workers blame one another rather than learning from their mistakes. This generates hostility and contributes to a toxic culture. Hostility at work can make even simple tasks difficult and stressful.

4. Overwork at work: We usually think that having a bit work wouldn't be stressful, but it may well be the other.

Not having employment means unproductive times where you are doing nothing, days that drag on and might be stressful. On the opposite hand, being overwhelmed with an impossible amount of labor to address will be very stressful and cause other problems.

5. Work / life balance: Work-life balance is incredibly important for several professionals. When the balance starts to shift in favor of labor, it becomes incredibly stressful.

Managing long hours, busy seasons, excessive travel, etc., are sources of stress.

6. Poor management: Bad bosses are available in various forms that is, non-evaluators, controllers, manipulators, etc. People under constant control can find it extremely difficult to figure properly and this becomes very stressful.

7. Poor communication: There are some common communication problems that occur within the workplace. Things are constantly changed by management and not communicated to employees. Not knowing what's happening can cause confusion, mistakes and so stress.

8. High turnover / Fear of losing your job: If our workplace always features a door open for brand spanking new employees, this will be stressful, as we constantly feel insecure. Constantly training new employees also generates stress for managers, as they're also under constant budget pressure to herald new employees.

9. Compensation / Poor Benefits: When compensation packages don't seem to be where employees want them to be, it undermines exertions and kills morale.

10. Physical Work Environment / Working Conditions: many roles have problems as they physically affect employee morale (Griffing and Moorhead, p.181-191, 2015).

2 CASE STUDY

The purpose of this paper is to inform about the phenomenon of stress in the work environment, based on the conclusions that will result from the study in Dimal Factory Sh.P.K from Albania trying to reach for the most resultative and proper practices.

Stress being a widespread phenomenon that affects many areas of our lives, the study can cause an awareness that this phenomenon exists.

The reaction of both employees ("reducing" stress) and the company (cause of stress) can be considered the best part of the purpose of the study.

We will consider this study important for two main reasons:

a. Nowadays, despite the positive stress as a phenomenon, it is more conceived as a disease and the damages it causes are different and to different degrees.

As long as it is something that brings harm, it should be studied to recognize and cope with it.

b. Every study in Albanian business is a good investment in knowing the reality and the more

we know the more people become aware and fight its negative phenomena.

Counting on the performance of production levels, tailoring firms are divided into four main groups which are: Make (M); Cut+Make (CM); Cut+Make+Trim (CMT) and Full package (FP).

Dimal Factory Sh.P.K. may be a clothing manufacturing-exporting company operating within the Albanian market.

Dimal Factory Sh.P.K.belongs to the category of full package (FP), which offers its customers the full package of service for the production of the required product.

Part of the firm's activity is also the import-export of industrial items, raw materials and auxiliaries, machinery and other production equipment for textiles and clothing.

3 METHODOLOGY

In order to be able to better interpret the factors of stress and their communication, the methodology used is based on the quantitative method. Quantitative research provides data that is unbiased and that can be expressed in understandable and objective numerical terms. That being said, this case provides an opportunity to explore the effect of stress on social behavior and its impact on professional and private life accompanied by key phrases that can translate the psychological and social status of employees.

3.1 *General quantitative data about respondents*

The firm has about 150 employees. The introductory part of the questionnaire contains general questions about gender, age, education and work period for the employees of this business. These are questions to know the demographics of the target group.

The dominant part is represented by women with a percentage of 76% because the study is in the textile field and only 24% are men.

Regarding the age groups, the first group of 18-25 years represents only 10%, the age groups 26-35 years with a percentage of 30% and the category 36-45 years with 36%.

The age group over 45 years represents only 24% (Figure 1).

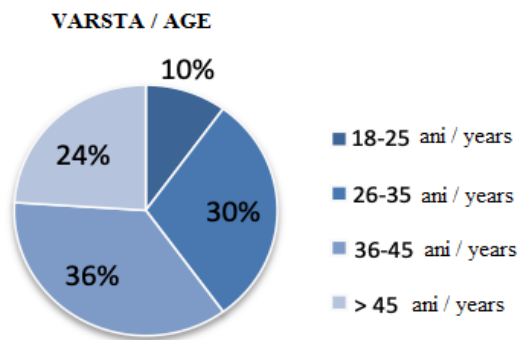


Figure 1. Respondents age and gender

Respondents are mainly with secondary education (66 %,) followed by 12% with 8-9 years of education and only 8% are with higher education. (Figure 2).

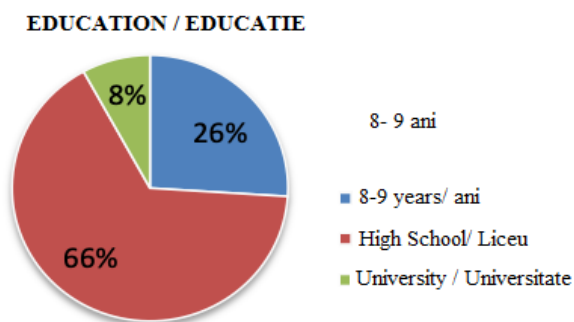


Figure 2. Level of education of respondents

Regarding the question "How long have you been working in this company" (Figure 3), it is observed that approximately 22% of them are employed from a few months to a year. 40% of them are employed for over 1-3 years and only 24% with a period of over 3 years.

WORK TIMEFRAME / PERIOADA DE LUCRU

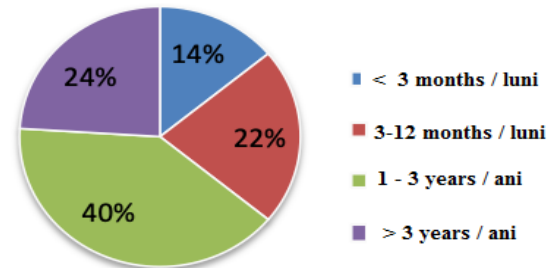


Figure 3. Work timeframe of respondents in organization

3.2 Stress Factors and Sources at Dimal Factory Sh.P.K.

The main stress factors in this company are mainly: increased work intensity, job insecurity including managerial style and organizational culture. From the answers of the respondents we can list the following sources:

- work where 64% is considered stressful;
- workload is stressful to the extent of 82%;
- pressure at work occupies the first place as a cause of stress, for 90% confirm in their answers;
- monotonia at work, where 50% of employees classify it as a source of stress;
- prolonged working hours are assessed as stressful with 72%;
- difficulty created by superiors is a source of stress for 68% of employees;
- material working conditions as a source of stress for 56% of employees;
- employee-superior communication is considered stressful to the extent of 62%;
- management of time by employees to complete the workload on time, is considered a source of stress by 68% of employees;

➤ the superior is stressful, estimated by 62% of employees.
So, with his management style he causes stress to the workers.

These above-mentioned sources, based on the responses of the respondents, constitute the main sources that cause stress in this company.
The following graph shows the sources with an impact scale over 50% (Figure 4).

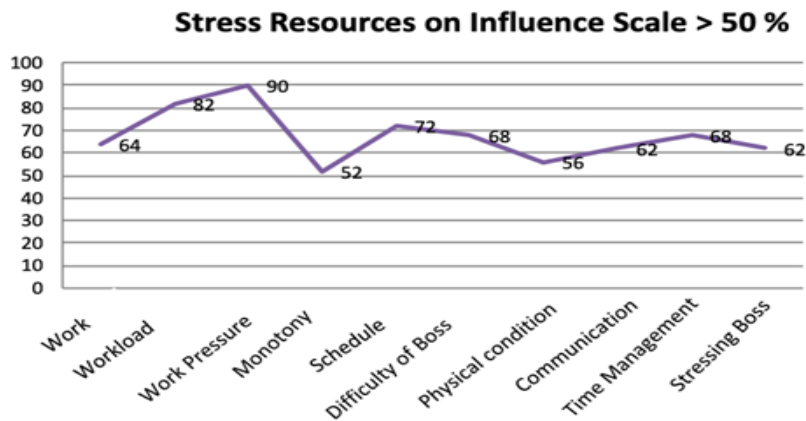


Figure 4. Stress resources on influence scale >50 %

In addition to the resources with a high degree of impact, in the Figure 5 we have also presented the sources with the lowest degree of

impact, under 50%. From the data analysis, we understand the impact of the stress level of each source, as not all sources have the same impact.

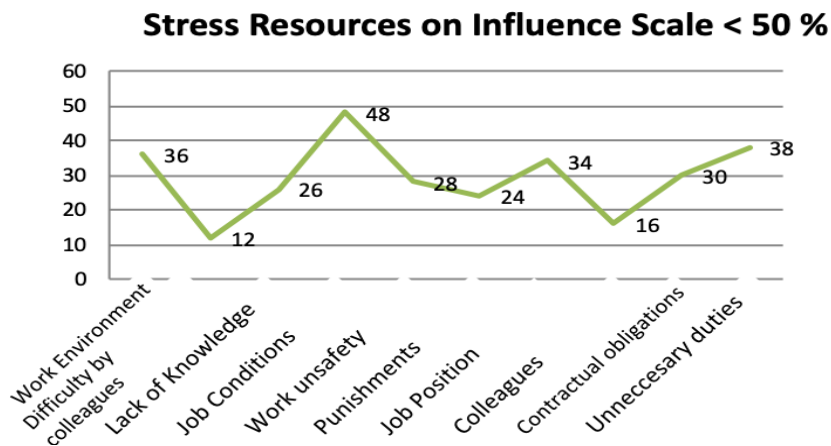


Figure 5. Stress resources on influence scale <50 %

3.3 Recognition and Consequences of Stress

In relation to the knowledge that employees have about stress and how much they take it into account, a percentage above average indicates that they are uninformed and do not pay due attention to it.

Based on this, as well as the many sources of high-level stress, we can see its consequences, indirectly or directly, on each worker, as follows:

- over 50% say they do not have enough time to devote to their family after work;
- 82% of them do not feel at all positive after a day of work;
- 50-70% feel very tired after finishing work, without the desire to do anything

and above all, feel like they are still at work;

- 68% consider work to be threatening and as if it is taking away a significant part of their life;
- regarding health, over 50% often feel nervous, as if their health is deteriorating and as if they get sick easily.

About 60% feel bad morally and often upset. Asked directly if they feel threatened by stress, 60% said they feel threatened, despite the little knowledge they have about it.

One of the objectives of this paper is to identify sources of stress are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Sources of stress

Sources of Stress	Stres Level	
Colleagues	0-33%	Low
Lack of Knowledge		
Uncertainty About the Workplace		
Penalties for Errors		
Contradictory Task		
Work Position	34-67%	Average
Work Environment		
Unnecessary Work		
Work Conditions		
Material Conditions		
Monotony		
Communication		
Work	68-100%	High
Difficulty from The Superior		
Time Management		
Working Hours		
Overload		
Pressure at Work		

We have classified the sources according to the evaluation by the employees (interpreted in %).

Resources with a rating of 0-33% are at the top of the table and are part of low impact resources and the stress caused is low.

The following is a list of sources with a rating of 34-67% that have a relatively small or high impact, we classify these as sources that cause moderate level stress. At the bottom are listed the sources with high impact from 68-100% and belong to the stressors that cause the highest level of stress in employees.

3.4 What is needed to fight stress?

In this last part of the questionnaire the questions are formulated in such a way that from the answers of the employees, we come to understand what they need to fight stress and to feel better.

Thus, employees need:

- review of working hours on weekends, Saturday to have part-time work and Sunday break. This is obviously required by a large proportion of employees, about 74%;
- the presence of a leader to understand and motivate employees, is sufficiently required by 66%. This probably means that current leaders need to be more empathetic and motivating;
- day rest of 30 minutes, despite the question 'if it is enough to relax', most have expressed positive, in the case when we ask them about the way of organizing the time of rest, with the possibility of rest every two hours, 66 % of them are in favor of this change;

- presence of music in the work environment is also required by 60% of employees;
- a canteen with painted walls with relaxing and inspiring images and soothing colors, is required by 80% of employees;
- motivational expression, not only in the canteen, but everywhere in the surrounding work environment, is required by 82% of respondents;
- having a mini-library, to use the time off to relax and read a book, seemed like an interesting idea for 62% of employees;
- the presence of a psychologist at work is approved by half of the employees;
- trust and support from the firm is required of 60% of employees;
- just reward for the work they do.

When asked if the 'Reward we receive is in proportion to the contribution we make', from Figure 6 we understand that only 6% of them agree, 12% answered neutrally and the rest do not agree with this statement.

This shows a great deal of employee dissatisfaction with the company for the way they are rewarded (Cartwright and Cooper, 1997, p.185)

In addition to the above-mentioned demands of employees to feel better, the firm manages to meet at least two things to which employees have responded positively:

- the supervisor / manager treats all employees equally, 48% of them responded positively and 30% were neutral;
- freedom in decision-making is also seen to some extent positively by employees.

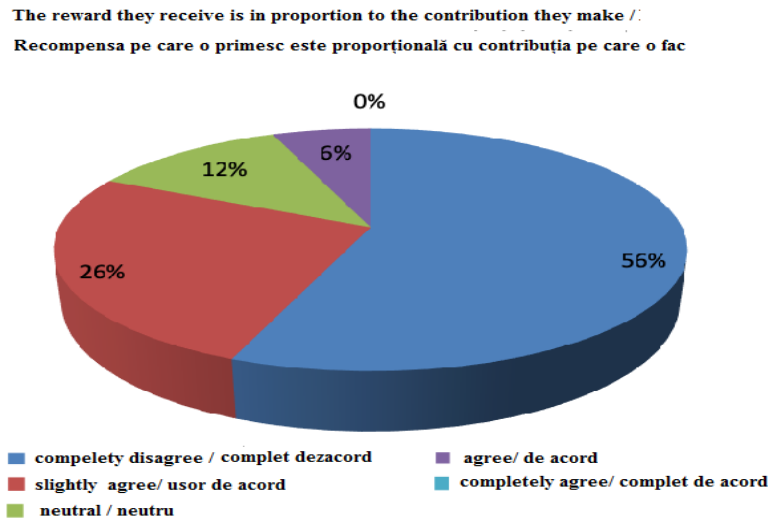


Figure 6. Employess dissatisfaction

4 CONCLUSIONS

From the collection, processing, analysis and interpretation of data, some of which are presented and graphically to have ease of understanding, we have reached clearer conclusions and answers about the issues addressed in this study.

Data analysis shows that there is stress in this company.

Especially in these times of pandemics where everyone's life is overloaded, we all become obsessed with stressful situations in every workplace. Figure 7 shows that most employees feel the presence of stress.

There are two main factors of stress:

- Increased work intensity and job insecurity.
- Management style and organizational culture.

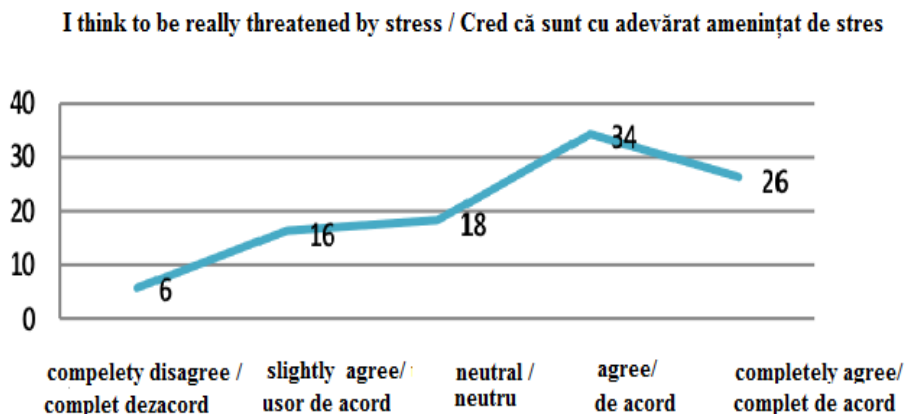


Figure 7. Stress effects on employees

As stressful resources of the organization we emphasize:

- work overload, as high workload and very good quality are required in short timeframes;
- pressure at work, to close product forecasts in quantity and time;
- loaded schedule, where you often work long hours, even on Sundays, just to close the high workflows;
- the superior also causes stress with his way of managing, as he has a directive behavior, while the work by its nature is considered stressful;
- employee-responsible communication (vertical communication);
- monotony (same work process) makes work boring and stressful;
- material conditions cause stress because the material base is old and creates frequent defects which require time;
- doing unnecessary work, employees are often convinced that they also do jobs that do not seem important;
- the work environment is listed as a cause of stress due to noise and dust.

In addition to the above causes, an external source of stress, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, also emerged strongly during this period.

The spread of this unknown virus globally, caused a lot of stress to the company's employees, as it affected many areas of life, not only in terms of fear of getting sick.

In summary the effects of the coronavirus appeared as follows:

- reduction of income, as with isolation at home for a period of time, people were left without work and locked up at home;
- fear of getting sick if they show up for work as the environment is closed and overcrowded and may pose a risk of infection.
- fear of losing their job even if they do not show up for work, but also if their

work activity closes as a result of the crisis caused by the pandemic.

- stress is also caused by the new rules that employees had to get used to, with wearing a mask and gloves all the time, which caused a lot of heat and difficulty during the work process.

So, in addition to the sources of stress, mainly organizational, this external source of stress was added, but with a high impact due to the fact that it is something new and unknown, these further increases fear and insecurity.

4.1 Recommendations

In order to further improve the situation we emphasize:

a) Recommendations for employees

The first and most important step we will suggest is to make each employee aware of the signs of stress.

This step will make them more real to understand what is happening around them and with them, what affects their physical and psychological health and the signs that appear.

Awareness will make them more attentive and more valuable.

Performing relaxing exercises and getting enough sleep improves memory function and maintains brain health. Socializing with colleagues at work creates the conditions for "feeling good".

During short breaks, instead of focusing on the Smartphone and being left alone, they socialize with colleagues.

Relationships with colleagues will help reduce stress at work.

Self-discipline is a good way to develop stress skills.

Difficulties in the event of a pandemic should be seen as challenges that need to be faced and overcome successfully.

Protecting from the harmful effects of stress, improving job satisfaction and improving the environment inside and outside the workplace.

b) Recommendations for employers

Preventing and managing stress in the workplace requires intervention at the organizational level.

They can be of different types, starting from structural (staffing levels, working hours, physical environment, etc.) to psychological (social support, work control, participation, etc.).

Employers should hire employees who fit the workplace, in order to avoid stress caused by lack of knowledge, job position, etc.

Training new employees is advisable as it helps to avoid the onset of stress as a result of lack of knowledge, but this can not exclude training and counseling of workers as well.

Training of the line of managers, who know how to motivate and convey positive energy to employees.

A good salary accompanied by bonuses and rewards depending on achievements.

Improving communication, is an important step towards reducing employee stress.

The company to be more open to employee issues.

Providing opportunities for employees to express themselves, organizing meetings once a month or even dedicated telephone lines.

Creating a positive work environment that is enjoyable for work.

We consider it useful to open a canteen for employees with relaxing paintings in soothing colors on the walls.

The presence of a mini-library, with a work environment with motivational expressions accompanied by background music.

Protective equipment with headphones for employees working in noise sectors.

Taking into account the concerns expressed by employees about problems or stressors in the workplace and analyzing the situation, it is necessary to develop a plan to minimize stressors.

It is also necessary to hire a psychologist who is close to employees to support and train them to cope with stress even in new conditions of pandemic Covid19.

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