Chapter 69
Work Stress and Psychosocial Factors in the Manufacturing Industry:
A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Companies are in constant search of greater productivity and better use of resources; however, they have neglected the human being. In this regard, it is important to analyze the presence of the psychosocial factors to which workers are exposed at all levels. These factors exert both a positive and a negative influence and indeed turn into a risk when they are not in balance with worker capabilities. This literature review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the psychosocial factors present in the manufacturing industries. The methodology consisted of conducting a search in two databases in addition to government pages. A combination of keywords was used for the search, and each publication was classified according to the factors analyzed, the type of evaluation, and the area of application. Out of all 2,468 publications found, eight were selected. Finally, work-related psychosocial factors were found to be the most analyzed.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, companies are looking for a better use of resources in order to increase their productivity. However, they are neglecting the most important resource which is the human element. As years go by, high market competitiveness and globalization have caused changes in the work environment, which have resulted in greater demands on workers. Such demands are placed by the need to execute more complex tasks in stressful work environments, with a high mental workload, and in the face of harassment and work violence among other factors. Such conditions are known as psychosocial work factors, and their importance has begun to be recognized throughout organizations because of their impact on the performance of workers and companies. However, the study and evaluation of such factors involve challenges that countries must recognize in order to face and evaluate them, and to develop strategies for their better management and prevention. Indeed, psychosocial factors are highly complex and, thus, difficult to understand as they depend on workers' perceptions and include aspects that range from individual characteristics to the social situations in which they operate outside of work hours. Thus, one way to facilitate the analysis of psychosocial factors is by grouping them into categories or areas; for example, they can be classified as personal aspects, factors inherent in work tasks, and organizational factors, among others, to try to explain the nature of their interactions and effects on health (International Labor Office, 1984).

In this regard, it is normal to observe that workers in the manufacturing industries are exposed to psychosocial factors as well as psychosocial factor risks. The International Labor Organization deemed the workplace as an important source of psychosocial risks by identifying that human beings spend most of their life at work. Consequently, it presented the workplace as the ideal place to treat workers and to look after their health and well-being. On the other hand, that organism affirmed that the psychosocial risk factors that take place in the world, and particularly in Mexico require effective government participation that supports the increase of health and safety in the workplace. Government must promote and help providing healthy working environment that allows workers to achieve honest or decent work through policies, strategic lines of action and projects with a preventive focus, so that work centers with safe and healthy conditions can prevail (Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social - STPS, 2016).

This present era is one in which the population is being affected by stress due to the excessive, and perhaps self-imposed, pace of life and work. Workers are continually exposed to situations that create an imbalance on a personal and work level, placing them in a state of vulnerability to diseases associated with nervousness, stress and unjustified fear (Lupien, McEwen, Gunnar, & Heim, 2009). These constant changes in the work environment are perceived by workers as threats and could lead to chronic stress, acting as backdrops for health disorders. The risk factors generated by the organization at the workplace lead to physiological, emotional, cognitive and behavioral responses that result in disease under certain conditions of intensity, frequency and duration (Trade Union Institute of Labor, Environment and Health - ISTAS, 2010). Finally, after analyzing the increase in these diseases, the World Health Organization has signaled 2020 as the year when chronic stress-related depression will be the second cause of disability in the world (Organización Mundial de la Salud- OMS, 2012).

Based on the foregoing, it can be affirmed that identifying and assessing psychosocial risks is an important task in this investigation due to the great impact they have on the workers' health and on their performance in the company, specifically in manufacturing companies. This work's main objective, then, is to determine the state of the art on the psychosocial factors present in manufacturing companies, as well as the instruments that are used to identify and evaluate them. Another important objective is

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