Enhancing Workplace Safety: Addressing Psychosocial Hazards in Modern Organizations

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Abstract:

Purpose: The purpose of this article is to analyse the impact of psychosocial hazards on safety management in organizations, identify key challenges related to minimizing them, and indicate effective strategies and best practices that support creating a safe work environment. The article focuses on the significance of psychosocial factors such as occupational stress, time pressure, interpersonal conflicts, and bullying, and their impact on the effectiveness of occupational health and safety measures.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The study is based on a literature review, an analysis of legal regulations concerning psychosocial safety, and case studies of organizations implementing strategies to minimize psychosocial risks. The article attempts to answer the research question: How do psychosocial risks affect the effectiveness of workplace safety management, and what preventive mechanisms are most effective in reducing them? The proposed hypothesis assumes that integrating stress management strategies, developing an organizational culture that promotes employee well-being, and implementing modern technologies to monitor psychosocial factors significantly improve the level of safety in the organization, reduce operational risk, and increase employee engagement and efficiency.

Findings: The analysis results indicate that effective organizational safety management requires considering psychosocial hazards on par with physical and operational risks. Work-related stress, imbalance between professional and private life, and ineffective communication can lead to increased absenteeism, decreased productivity, and heightened risk of workplace accidents. The main challenges include a lack of awareness among management about the consequences of psychosocial hazards, insufficient stress monitoring mechanisms, and difficulties in integrating well-being policies with organizational business goals. Among best practices, systematic employee training, promoting open communication, and implementing digital tools to monitor stress levels and team engagement stand out.

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Practical implications: *The practical implications of the study provide organizations with practical recommendations for more effective management of safety in the context of psychosocial hazards. Implementing stress management programs, work-life balance policies, and developing soft skills among managers can contribute to improving employee well-being and increasing their productivity. The article also emphasizes the need for further research on the impact of new work models, including hybrid and remote work, on stress levels and their consequences for organizational safety. In particular, it is important to develop methods for assessing psychosocial risk and utilizing advanced technologies to monitor and reduce it.*

Keywords: *Psychosocial hazards, organisational safety management, workplace safety, occupational stress, interpersonal conflicts, mobbing.*

JEL codes: *J81, M54, I31, D23, J28.*

Paper type: *Research article.*

1. Introduction

Modern organizations operate in a dynamically changing environment that presents numerous challenges for both employees and employers. One of the key aspects influencing the effectiveness and stability of an organization is workplace safety, which increasingly extends beyond physical aspects to include psychosocial factors.

Occupational stress, time pressure, lack of balance between professional and private life, interpersonal conflicts, or mobbing are just some of the psychosocial hazards that can negatively impact employees' health and well-being.

Managing safety in the workplace therefore requires a holistic approach, considering not only the elimination of physical risks but also minimizing the negative effects of stress and other psychosocial factors. The impact of these hazards on an organization is multidimensional – from reduced productivity and increased sick leave to increased risk of workplace accidents and staff turnover. Consequently, implementing safety management strategies that integrate psychological, organizational, and social aspects becomes crucial.

The purpose of this article is to analyse the impact of psychosocial hazards on safety management systems in organizations and to present best practices and strategies aimed at minimizing them. Research in this area can provide valuable insights for managers and OSH specialists, indicating directions for actions that foster a safe and healthy work environment.

2. The Significance of Psychosocial Hazards in the Work Environment

Modern organizations operate in a dynamically changing environment, which requires employees not only to achieve high productivity but also to cope with increasing demands (Ciekanowski and Nowicka, 2019, p. 28). With technological advancements, globalization, and growing pressure to achieve results, psychosocial hazards in the workplace are becoming increasingly common.

Traditionally, workplace safety management focused on eliminating physical hazards, but current realities require consideration of psychosocial aspects, which can significantly impact employee health and efficiency.

One of the key psychosocial hazards in the workplace is occupational stress. It results from an imbalance between professional demands and the ability to meet them. Factors such as excessive workload, lack of support from supervisors and colleagues, unclear job roles, or lack of career development opportunities can lead to chronic stress (Mościcka-Teske, 2016, p. 140)[6].

The consequences of prolonged stress include burnout, decreased motivation, health problems (e.g., cardiovascular diseases), and reduced work quality. Among the problems caused or exacerbated by work, the most common is fatigue, affecting up to 62% of Polish workers (37% in the EU).

The second most common issue is headaches (49% of workers), and the third, directly related to mental health, is stress, depression, or anxiety, reported by 37% (Structural Research Institute, 2023). Below is a chart showing the proportion of employees reporting the presence of selected psychosocial hazards in their workplace.

The contemporary work environment is characterized by high dynamism and a constant pursuit of process optimization. Employees are increasingly required to complete multiple tasks within limited timeframes, leading to increased pressure and a sense of continuous tension. Excessive demands can result in a decrease in the quality of work performed, as well as lead to burnout and health disorders. Time pressure can also affect relationships between employees, leading to conflicts and a decrease in organizational morale (Chrupała-Pniak and Polak, 2024, p. 145).

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[6]*A. Mościcka-Teske, A. Potocka, Zagrożenia psychospołeczne w miejscu pracy w Polsce, „Organizacja i Zarządzanie", nr 70 2016, s. 140.*

Figure 1. *The proportion of employees reporting the presence of selected psychosocial hazards in their workplace.*
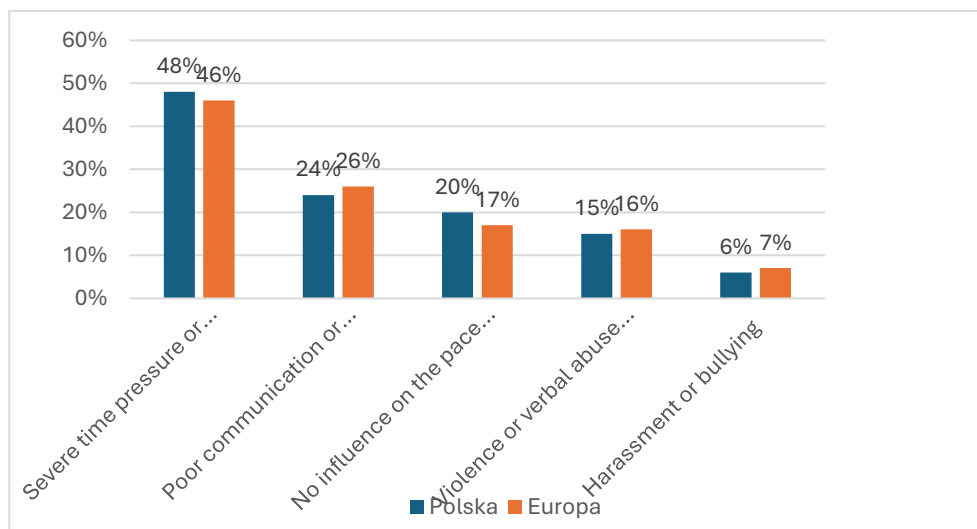
**Source:** *Flash Eurobarometer – OSH Pulse survey.*

Excessive demands can result in a decrease in the quality of work performed, as well as lead to burnout and health disorders. Time pressure can also affect relationships between employees, leading to conflicts and a decrease in organizational morale (Chrupała-Pniak and Polak, 2024, p. 145). One of the greatest challenges for modern organizations is ensuring that employees can maintain a balance between their professional and personal lives.

In the era of digitalization and remote work, the boundaries between work and personal life are becoming increasingly blurred. Employees often feel pressured to be available outside standard working hours, which can lead to overload and a decrease in mental well-being. Imbalance in this area can cause frustration, fatigue, and dissatisfaction with work, which in turn affects organizational effectiveness.

The relationships between employees and their supervisors are crucial for the atmosphere at work and the effectiveness of teams. Interpersonal conflicts can arise from differences in work styles, lack of communication, competition for promotions, or division of tasks. In extreme cases, poorly managed conflicts can lead to mobbing, which is systematic harassment and humiliation of an employee.

Bobbing is a particularly dangerous psychosocial threat because it can lead to serious health consequences, including depression, anxiety, or post-traumatic stress disorder (Merecz, Potocka, and Waszkowska, 2019, p. 10). Below is presented the prevalence of negative experiences related to mobbing in the workplace.

Figure 2. *The prevalence of negative experiences related to mobbing in the workplace.*
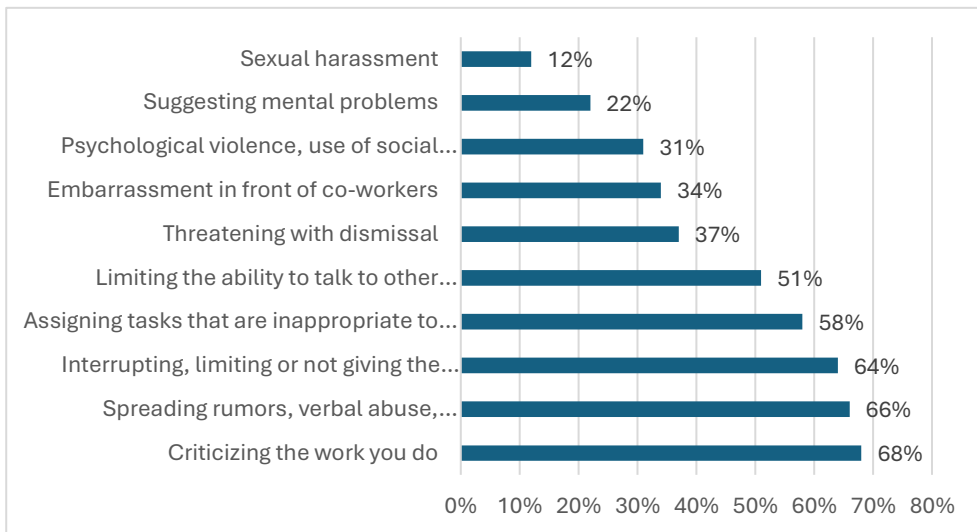
Source: *Mobbing w środowisku pracy, Raport, 2024, Antal, Dobra fundacja.*

Organizations should strive to eliminate conflicts by building a culture of open communication, mediation, and psychological support for employees. Implementing effective strategies to prevent psychosocial hazards is crucial for the health of employees and the efficiency of the organization. Employers should invest in psychological support programs, stress management training, and create conditions that foster a balance between professional and private life. An important element of prevention is also promoting a healthy organizational culture, where values such as respect, cooperation, and open communication are prioritized.

Psychosocial hazards constitute a significant problem for modern organizations and have a direct impact on the quality of work, employee well-being, and business outcomes. Occupational stress, time pressure, work-life imbalance, and interpersonal conflicts can lead to negative health and organizational consequences. Therefore, it is crucial to implement effective strategies for managing these hazards to create a safe and supportive work environment that fosters professional and personal development for employees (Ciekanowski *et al.,* 2025).

3. The Impact of Psychosocial Hazards on Safety Management

Effective safety management in an organization requires consideration not only of physical risks but also of psychosocial aspects. The modern work environment is characterized by high dynamics and increasing demands, leading to increased occupational stress and other negative psychosocial factors. Chronic stress, inappropriate organizational culture, lack of support from superiors, and imbalance

between professional and private life can increase the risk of workplace accidents and negatively affect the organization's effectiveness.

One of the most significant psychosocial hazards is excessive time pressure, which overloads employees and can lead to decreased concentration and poor decision-making. Prolonged exposure to stress weakens both mental and physical resilience, resulting in increased sick leaves, higher absenteeism, and staff turnover. An unhealthy work environment also fosters interpersonal conflicts, which can escalate to mobbing, further deteriorating the organization's atmosphere. Mobbing and unethical practices can lower team morale, negatively impacting collaboration and organizational effectiveness.

An inappropriate organizational culture based on a lack of trust, excessive control, or competition can weaken employee engagement and influence their willingness to follow safety protocols (Chrząszcz *et al.,* 2024, p. 204). Employees who experience high pressure or lack support may ignore safety procedures or make impulsive decisions, increasing the risk of accidents and failures.

Additionally, the absence of open communication and an effective problem-reporting system can lead to the concealment of hazards and hinder effective responses to dangerous situations. The consequences of such an approach may also manifest in an increasing number of reported cases of burnout and health issues, which pose significant burdens on healthcare systems and organizational budgets.

Implementing strategies to minimize psychosocial risks is becoming a crucial element in modern approaches to workplace safety management. In this context, building a positive organizational culture, promoting open communication, and providing psychological support for employees are extremely important.

Organizations should invest in stress management programs, training on coping with pressure, and initiatives aimed at improving the balance between professional and personal life. Implementing flexible work arrangements, allowing employees to take regenerative breaks, and promoting a healthy lifestyle can significantly reduce stress levels and improve the well-being of employed individuals.

These actions not only contribute to increased safety but also improve work efficiency and overall employee satisfaction. Employers should also pay attention to the role of leaders and managers in shaping the work environment—proper training of management staff in managing emotions and supporting the team can significantly reduce the occurrence of psychosocial hazards.

Furthermore, implementing stress monitoring systems and intervention programs can help quickly identify and eliminate problem sources. An example of effective practice is implementing anonymous surveys to assess employee satisfaction levels and analysing risk factors within the organization.

Psychosocial hazards have a significant impact on workplace safety management and can contribute to increased accident risk, reduced productivity, and staff turnover. Appropriate strategies for managing these hazards, based on employee support, promoting healthy relationships, and shaping a safe organizational culture, are crucial for ensuring an effective and sustainable safety system in the workplace.

Organizations should undertake comprehensive actions aimed at eliminating the negative effects of occupational stress by implementing tools that support mental health and well-being of employees.

Only a holistic approach to safety management that considers both physical and psychosocial aspects can guarantee sustainable development and stability of the organization in a dynamically changing business environment (Nowicka *et al.,* 2024).

4. Directions of Changes in Occupational Safety Management

Changing work conditions and the growing awareness of employers and employees indicate the need to implement new solutions in safety management. The traditional approach, focusing mainly on physical hazards and compliance with occupational health and safety standards, is no longer sufficient in the face of dynamic changes in the labour market. Modern organizations must consider new risks, such as occupational stress, burnout, interpersonal conflicts, or the negative effects of prolonged remote work.

One of the key directions for change is promoting an organizational culture that supports mental health. In modern organizations, there is a push to create a work environment where employees feel supported and have conditions conducive to good well-being.

This includes open communication, clear procedures for preventing mobbing and discrimination, and supporting work-life balance initiatives (Bhat, Yousuf, and Saba, 2023). Leadership models also play a crucial role, where managers are aware of the importance of mental health and can effectively support their employees.

Implementing well-being programs represents another significant direction of change. Increasingly, companies are investing in programs aimed at improving employee well-being, including access to psychological consultations, relaxation classes, flexible working hours, and the opportunity to take regeneration breaks. Below are the dimensions of good well-being that the University of Wisconsin introduces for its employees.

Research indicates that organizations that prioritize the mental and physical well-being of their employees achieve better results, have lower staff turnover, and higher operational efficiency.

Figure 3. *Dimensions of Good Well-being (Well-being).*
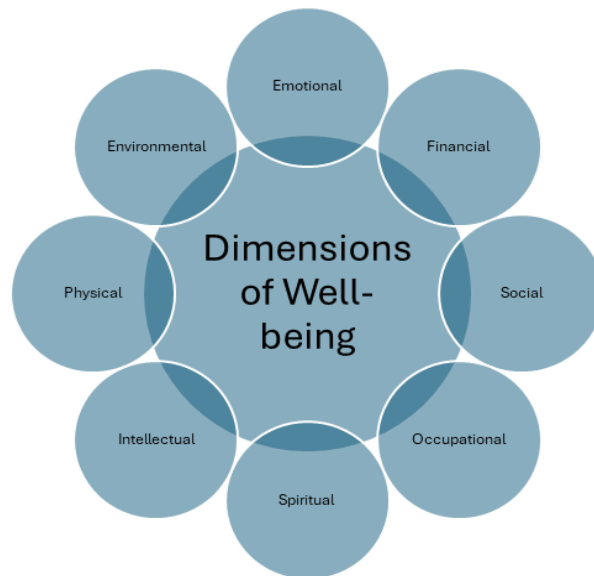
Source: Employee Well-being, https://www.wisconsin.edu/ohrwd/well-being/.

Developing soft skills among management staff is crucial for effective safety management in organizations. Traditionally, managers were primarily evaluated based on financial and operational results. However, the modern approach suggests that skills such as empathy, interpersonal communication, stress management, and team engagement are equally important. Leaders who can identify early signs of employee burnout and respond appropriately contribute to creating a safer work environment.

The integration of technologies supporting stress monitoring and employee well-being is becoming increasingly popular in organizations. Advanced analytical tools enable the monitoring of stress levels among employees, analysis of behavioural patterns, and early detection of issues that may lead to burnout or increased risk of workplace accidents. Mobile applications, biofeedback systems, and artificial intelligence platforms analysing productivity indicators are just a few examples of technologies that can support modern safety management (Nowicka *et al.,* 2024, p. 205).

It is also necessary to adapt legal regulations and OSH standards to the new challenges arising from remote and hybrid work. Traditional OSH regulations often do not account for the specifics of work outside the office, leading to situations where responsibility for workstation ergonomics or employees' mental health becomes unclear. Employers should introduce clear rules regarding working hours, employee availability, and breaks, and provide training on organizing work in a hybrid model (Potocka, 2010, p. 341).

The obligation to comply with EU regulations and institutional frameworks in the area of occupational safety and health allows for the use of a unified research methodology, which in turn increases the possibilities for applying the results obtained in comparative studies. The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) regularly conducts analyses of both existing and new hazards related to work performed (Matuska, 2017, p. 130).

Effective management of workplace safety requires adapting to the changing professional reality and implementing modern strategies to minimize psychosocial hazards. Organizations that invest in a healthy organizational culture, well-being programs, managerial competency development, and modern technologies can expect higher productivity, lower absenteeism, and better employee engagement (Murphy, 2023). In the future, this holistic approach to safety will become a key factor in the success of every organization.

5. Findings and Conclusions

Managing workplace safety requires consideration not only of traditional physical hazards but also increasingly common psychosocial hazards. Occupational stress, excessive time pressure, work-life imbalance, and interpersonal conflicts can lead to decreased work efficiency, increased absenteeism, and a higher risk of workplace accidents.

Effective safety management must therefore include comprehensive strategies aimed at improving employee well-being, promoting a healthy organizational culture, and implementing modern solutions that support both physical and psychological safety.

The conclusions from the analysis indicate that organizations investing in reducing psychosocial hazards achieve better results in terms of work efficiency, employee engagement, and overall safety. Developing soft skills among management staff is crucial, as empathetic and aware leadership can significantly reduce the negative effects of stress and improve the work environment.

It is equally important to adapt legal regulations and organizational policies to the realities of modern employment forms, such as remote and hybrid work. Employers should implement well-being strategies, invest in technologies monitoring employee well-being, and promote a balance between professional and private life to effectively counteract the negative effects of psychosocial burdens.

Despite the growing interest in psychosocial hazards in the workplace, there remains a need for further research in this area. It is essential to provide a detailed definition of the long-term effects of psychosocial risk factors and their impact on organizational outcomes. Research should also focus on the effectiveness of implemented preventive strategies and methods for measuring stress levels and other psychosocial hazards. Particular attention should be paid to new challenges arising

from the digitization and automation of work, which can lead to new forms of mental strain, as well as analysing differences between economic sectors in the context of managing psychosocial safety.

In the face of constantly changing work conditions, future research should also focus on developing universal models for managing psychosocial safety that can be adapted to different industries and types of organizations. A better understanding of the mechanisms by which psychosocial hazards affect employee functioning, along with more effective strategies for eliminating them, can contribute significantly to improving the quality of the work environment, thereby enhancing organizational stability and efficiency.

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