Chapter 4
Human Factors in Context to Occupational Health and Wellbeing

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ABSTRACT

A workplace never resides in isolation and hence in the workplace employees experience both psychological and social conditions which often called as psychosocial work environment. The psychosocial work environment has become continuous component in studies of occupational health and stress and encompasses concerns on the risks which generate from the psyche perceptions of the individual’s concern in accordance with the risks of the societal environment. The psychosocial environment at work has a deteriorating effect on the general health of workers such as musculoskeletal disorders, mental disorders, cardiovascular diseases, stress, burnout, sickness absence, labor turnover along with the organizational outcomes like the effectiveness of work, motivation, and performance. Psychosocial factors in response to the health repair process have become increasingly important in both developed and developing countries. Such factors have not frequently been studied or addressed in developing countries even though 80 percent of the working population lives in developing countries.

INTRODUCTION

The International Labor Organization (ILO) has defined psychosocial risk factors at work “as the interaction between and among work environment, job content, organizational conditions and workers capacities, needs, cultures, personal extra-job considerations that may, through perceptions and experience, influence

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health, work performance and job satisfaction” (ILO, 1986). Gone are the days when physical risks in
the working environment were considered the only factor that affects the safety, health, and wellbeing
of the workers. Psychosocial risks have emerged and commonly accepted as a major concern over the
workers’ health and safety with several aspects that includes, but not limited to, work demands either
quantitative or qualitative, lack of control, rewards and social support, job insecurity, and interpersonal
relationships at the workplace (Leka et al., 2015).

These risks are mainly addressed in developed countries and lack attention in the Industrially De-
veloping Countries (IDCs) due to insufficient knowledge over such risks. Employers in IDCs may fall
back with the awareness of psychosocial risks and work-related stress even though these risks were the
second most important issue after accident and injuries that needed an urgent attention for impediment
(Kortum, Leka, & Cox, 2010). EU-OSHA’s and European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerg-
ing Risks (ESENER) reports that momentous work related changes around the globe heading towards
emerging psychosocial risks. From designing and managing of work to the economic and social context
of work, these psychosocial risks results an increased level of stress which can lead to the worsening
of physical and mental health (ESENER, 2009). According to the Global Occupational Health Net-
work (GOHNET) report, psychosocial risk has either not or has only scarcely been addressed in newly
industrialized countries and in developing countries (WHO, 2007b), even though 80% of the working
workforce lives in developing countries (Rosenstock & Cullen, 2006).

Moreover, advancement in technologies and globalization has brought significant number of changes
in the workplace. The World Health Organization (WHO) has disseminated the goal of promoting health
in the work place by controlling the psychosocial risks at work in their global plan of action 2008-2017.
However, WHO finds there is a significant gap in relation to safety, health, and risks associated with the
workplace environment within and amongst countries (Dollard, Shimazu, Nordin, Brough, & Tuckey,
2014a). IDCs face numerous challenges in accordance with the advancement in technologies and global-
ization which results an increase in psychosocial risks and work-related stress within these developing
countries (Widanarko, Legg, Devereux, & Stevenson, 2014).

Study Objective

Emotionally demanding situations refers to frequency of exposure or charged interactions at work. Previ-
ous empirical findings have shown the negative as well as the positive impact of emotionally demanding
conditions at work on employee health and wellbeing; however, to the best of the researcher’s knowl-
edge, there is hardly any study which has shown the intervening effect of job insecurity in relationship
between emotional demands, social support colleagues and health and wellbeing on the workers of the
manufacturing industries. This relationship will be well explained by the health impairment process of
Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model. Furthermore, it is also important to consider the external effects
caued by the style of leadership prevailing in the organizations. Specifically, health-specific leadership
style can really strengthen this relationship.

The argument stems from the self-concept theory (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993) which explained
that the actions of the motivational leadership implicate the self-concept of the followers. Hence, health
aversive behaviors of individuals can be modified to health conducive behaviors if environment in which
they operate educate them about its importance (Conner & Norman, 2005). To create that environment,
leaders play the most important role because of the position they hold. They act as role model and their
behaviors shapes up followers perceptions and behaviors, through “followers self-concepts” (Viktor, 1982).