Occupational Well-Being or Techno-Stress

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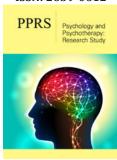
Opinion

The introduction of new information and communication technologies in all areas has generated different forms of communication, relationship, information, learning and work as well. These new technologies have brought many advantages; however, many drawbacks have also come with them. Now, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, we are beginning to be aware of these drawbacks. The adaptive changes brought about by new technologies entail serious and important risks and consequences for both workers and organizations. Technostress is one of the newest risks due to the use and utilization of new technologies, manifested in two ways, either by a maladjustment or rejection, or by a total dependence. We can say that technostress is a specific form of work stress, related to the use of information and communication technologies. Technostress is a general term that encompasses other problems that stem from the same root.

According to The WHO constitution states, «Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity» [1]. An important implication of this definition is that mental health is more than just the absence of mental disorders or disabilities. So, occupational risk prevention, from a comprehensive perspective, must prevent risks and promote long-term comprehensive health (physical, mental and social) of the people who work in an organization. Therefore, we must go to a positive paradigm of occupational health; we cannot stagnate in a mere prevention or protection against risk. Well-being must include the adequacy of the worker's own characteristics to their desires, perspectives, or capacities [2,3]. The contexts and particularities of the work, and the individual characteristics of each worker as well, will inevitably lead us to a conditioning of the worker's affective response towards the different aspects of his work. Therefore, we must bear in mind that all psychosocial components transcend in one way or another in the individual; it means that they may perceive a situation as stressful or not, or that they will not be able to overcome it due to their ability to adapt and/or tolerate these stimuli.

In relation to the above, the term adaptation has a double function: on the one hand, the term implies adapting the reality coming from the outside to the way of being and to the needs of the worker; but on the other hand, the term implies transforming these needs according to the original reality of the outside. The so-called theory of factors or bifactorial theory of satisfaction, also known as Herzberg's theory (Herzberg's Motivation Two–Factor Theory) distinguishes two very different sets of variables in relation to work: job content variables or motivating variables and hygiene variables or work context variables [4-7]:

i. Motivators include achievement, recognition, doing interesting work, responsibility, promotion (based on merit), and personal development.

ii. Among the hygiene variables are the company's policy and administration, the employee's relationship with his bosses and colleagues, working conditions, salary, etc.

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Through Herzberg's Motivation Two-Factor Theory we can point out a series of factors that cause satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Therefore, we must be clear that the motivating factors will lead individuals to have positive attitudes to work and, therefore, they will feel satisfied. On the contrary, demotivation will generate opposite feelings such as dissatisfaction, anger, or disgust. The psychosocial variables are related to the manifestation of behaviors derived from frustration and the appearance of group and individual conflicts. Labor frustration and conflict are the effects of fatigue, monotony, job fragmentation, strict and burdensome supervision, job insecurity, the use of negative incentives and incorrect methods for selection and selection. staff integration. In psychology, stress refers to certain events in which we find ourselves with situations that imply strong demands on the individual, which can exhaust their coping resources [8-10].

The definition of stress has been very controversial. This has been the case since the Canadian physiologist Hans Selye applied it to the field of psychology [11]. Stress has been understood:

i.   As a reaction or response of the individual, physiological changes, emotional reactions, behavioral changes, etc.

ii.   As a stimulus, capable of provoking a stress reaction.

iii.   As an interaction between the characteristics of the stimulus and the individual's resources.

Currently, this last approach is accepted as the most complete. Thus, we consider that stress is produced by an imbalance between the demands of the environment (internal or external stressors) and the available resources of the subject [12]. In this way, the elements to consider in the stressful interaction are situational variables (for example, in the workplace), individual variables of the subject facing the situation and consequences of stress. Technostress is a particular case of stress: it is an emerging psychosocial risk, closely related to the widespread use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in a society in which their use is widespread and jobs proliferate with them. Craig Brod defined technostress as a modern malady of adaptation caused by the inability to deal with new computer technologies in a healthy way [13]. Thus, we assume the negative impact of technostress and describe it in terms of illness.

However, advances in the use of technology in the world of work have promoted flexibility and working from remote locations. Thus, companies can find the best specialists no matter how far away they are. In the same way, certain people can get jobs that they could not do with traditional means. Therefore, ICT must allow improving efficiency and balance between personal life and work life. However, the problem appears when the worker cannot respond to the requirement of continuous use of ICTs or when flexibility requirements exceed the ability to adapt to the person, overlapping work with personal and family life. A first approach to this phenomenon, associated with the use of technology and its psychological impact, which describes the inability to cope with the new technological demands and which Rosen and Weil later extended, after 16 years of research, to refer to any negative impact on attitudes, thoughts, behaviors, or psychology caused directly or indirectly by technology [14-16]. The theoretical framework proposed by these authors, as Marta Chiappetta [17] points out, has evolved over time to also cover the risks of permanent exposure to information, facilitated by digital technology, which determine information overload. Thus, the inability to manage this amount of information can cause a state of anxiety, characterized by a generalized fear of being overwhelmed by an immense amount of information. The technostress of the worker who uses ICTs at any time and in any place, arises from the rupture of the work space/time binomial: people who can work twenty-four (24) hours, seven (7) days a week, being permanently located, in continuous supervision or pending from the platform so as not to lose information. Given this situation, it is necessary to take measures to combat this foreseeable increase in stress. All work-related stress, such as technostress, can be prevented or counteracted by redesigning the job, improving social support, and reasonably compensating for the effort made. Aspects such as training employees or avoiding overload and lack of work are fundamental in this regard.

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