

Wellbeing at workplace – health promotion and types of stress in Southern Transdanubia

Munkahelyi jólét - egészségfejlesztés és stressz típusai a Dél-Dunántúlon

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Abstract

The effectiveness of organizations is decisively influenced by the satisfaction and wellbeing of employees. We examined in this study how workplace motivational tools affect the wellbeing and effectiveness of employees, what causes stress and what kind of solutions can be used to improve the atmosphere at workplace, and which type of elements are presented in workplace health promotion. 157 evaluable responses were received using the online questionnaire. The questions related to the survey were published online, using the Google Forms system. Based on the replies of the questionnaire it can be stated that the majority of the respondents are not familiar with the concept of health promotion. A sense of wellbeing is enhanced by increased wages, esteem and extra cash rewards. If the atmosphere at workplace is more pleasant, calmer, more balanced, it will clearly lead to better satisfaction, they said. Most of stress is caused by the high workload, ensuring customer satisfaction, and the wrong relationship with the managers. 55% of respondents said they do not like working in their current workplace.

Keywords: wellbeing, stress, human resource management

JEL: M14, M54

Absztrakt

A szervezetek hatékonyságát döntően befolyásolja az alkalmazottak elégedettsége és jólléte. Ebben a tanulmányban megvizsgáltuk, hogy a munkahelyi motivációs eszközök hogyan befolyásolják az alkalmazottak jólétét és hatékonyságát, mi okozza a stresszt, és milyen megoldásokkal lehet javítani a munkahelyi légkört, és milyen elemek vannak jelen az egészségfejlesztésben. Az online kérdőívre 157 értékelhető válasz érkezett. A kérdőívet online, a Google Űrlapok rendszer segítségével tettük közzé. A kérdőívre adott válaszok alapján megállapítható, hogy a válaszadók többsége nem ismeri az egészségfejlesztés fogalmát. A jóllét érzését növelik a megemelt bérek, a megbecsülés és az extra pénzjutalmak. Ha kellemesebb, nyugodtabb, kiegyensúlyozottabb a munkahelyi légkör, ez egyértelműen elégedettséghez vezet - nyilatkozták. A stressz nagy részét a túlterhelés, az ügyfélgondozás és a vezetővel való kapcsolat (rossz) minősége okozza. A válaszadók 55 %-a saját bevallása alapján nem szeret a jelenlegi munkahelyén dolgozni.

Kulcsszavak: wellbeing, stressz, emberi erőforrás menedzsment

JEL kódok: M14, M54

Introduction



People spend most of their time at the workplace and many workers have to live and work together. However, the deterioration of health and the loss of work do not pay for either the employer or the employee. It can be concluded that it is in the interest of both parties to preserve health, to encourage and develop a healthy environment and conditions (Héder and Dajnoki, 2019; Pázmán-Iski and Gáthy, 2020). In this economic situation, both the preservation and maintenance of human values are of great importance (Faragó et al, 2019). The European Network for the Promotion of Health at Work has defined occupational health promotion as “the joint effort of employers, workers and society to promote the health and wellbeing of workers” (EuGuides, 2016). Workplace health promotion aims to make healthier, more balanced people in a modern workplace with a humane and understanding atmosphere. As a result of full balance, lasting stress can be reduced in the short term, and employee`s loyalty and the performance of their work can be increased. This is because organizational performance mainly depends on the performance of individuals and employees (Veresné Somosi and Hoga, 2011; Krajcsák, 2018).

A significant number of multinational companies around the world have already initiated health promotion programs and -tools to improve employee satisfaction and health (Haffner and Bárdos, 2019; Borbély, 2019b; Faller, 2018; Terry, 2019). People are already aware of that this kind of change is needed, but in fact more than 40% of Hungarian companies have not yet proposed any programs to improve job satisfaction, according to an online study (Sipos, 2015). The article points out the importance of stress management, according to 40% of Hungarians go through some form of depression in their lives, so is no surprise that effective stress management has become a key issue (Borbély, 2019a; Kiss and Kontor, 2020; Pellerone, Ledda & Rapisarda, 2017). Surveys also show that specific programs, developments and special trainings can effectively address the negative effects of stress (Proper and Oostrom, 2019). The advantage being developed is that it reduces labor migration, improves the company's attractiveness to labor, the quality of products, and the external perception of the company. According to a study published in 2013, the solution is indeed a complex health care program on the part of employers, these can be specific screenings, learning appropriate techniques to achieve and maintain a healthy lifestyle (HEALZZ, 2013).

According to a study published in 2017, there are several answers to the question of what makes a good job. Many aspects matter, e.g. material benefits, the work environment (material, from a human point of view) (Pató and Illés, 2018). It is necessary to highlight to have a good relationship with colleagues, as it corresponds in vain to everything else, e.g. wages, working hours, office, etc., the bad collective can ruin everything (Marek, 2016). This is where the leader and his responsibilities occur (Rojatz, Merchant & Nitsch, 2017). His job is as important as the others since they have to maintain the good atmosphere together. Even if there is a disagreement, it can be peacefully discussed. In case it doesn't pan out well, then surely the leader needs to step in and act as a good mediator (Profession, 2017).

Another reason to study workplace health promotion is that work time is constantly increasing. The number of hours worked per week and the length of time spent working effectively have also increased in recent years (Bokor et al, 2014).

Table 1. Recommendations for occupational health promotion

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Building mutual trust with senior employees ▪ Recognition, award in case of successful work ▪ Initiation in preparing and making decisions ▪ Involvement in the planning and development of new goals ▪ Regular meetings with subordinates to solve any issues that may arise ▪ Assigning individual, personalized tasks ▪ Encouraging and facilitating employees' personal goals ▪ Assign challenging tasks to the right subordinate, thus supporting opportunities for personal development ▪ Participation in professional exhibitions and programs, representation ▪ Continuous feedback from employees (for example, a problem is detected, they should be able to react in the first place) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organizing team building programs, trainings, events for families ▪ Workplace catering, e.g. placement of vending machines for healthy food and drink ▪ Support for our further trainings, courses, schools ▪ Joint corporate events, family celebrations (Christmas, Birthday) ▪ Cafeteria ▪ Providing rest time during working hours ▪ Comfortable dining room, office design ▪ Allocation of extra work with rewards and financial compensation ▪ Appropriate technical equipment at the workplace, e.g. computer, photocopier, furniture, etc. ▪ Advancement, salary increase, possibility to award rewards
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Source: Own research

Bernadett Szolnoki's study on occupational health promotion states that there is a narrower (micro) and a wider (macro) environment that affects our way of life and -health. By "macro-environment" we mean society and by "micro-environment" we refer to the workplace. Both factors are closely related: one does not exist without the other. Unfortunately we live in a world where stress is increasingly present. We cannot rule out social influences, they affect everything. Laws, statutory provisions, subsidies and operating conditions: these are all defining elements of how a workplace works (Szolnoki, 2010). Based on the results of the literature, the following main recommendations can be formulated (*Table 1*).

2. Methods and materials

In our research, we examined health promotion and types of stress using a primary desk research. Our health plays an important role in our lives, we spend most of our day working, so connecting the two areas is of paramount importance. We did start an online questionnaire (15.1.2020.-1.3.2020.) and evaluated 157 responses from Somogy, Baranya, Tolna counties (Southern Transdanubia region). The research covered the following topics: the causes of stress in the workplace, the workplace atmosphere and health promotion, its appearance and types, and suggestions for solutions.

We considered to find out how the atmosphere is perceived in the workplace where the respondents fill in the questionnaire and what tools they think could be used to improve the current situation. We sought answers to whether they were familiar with the concept of what occupational health promotion was, how important they saw it was, whether it was experienced in their workplace, and whether they thought it was needed at all.

The questionnaire was published online using the Google Forms system. The questionnaire was non-representative and non-random, it based on the so called "snowball sampling". The essence of the snowball method is to initially interview only a few members of the target group, and then to involve more and more people through the participants who have already been interviewed (e.g. involving their acquaintances). Participants had to answer 15 different questions. To the question "How important do you consider the following advantages in your workplace?" participants gave answers on a 1-5 Likert scale. Background variables included gender, age and education and number of years spent at the workplace.

Statistical analyzes were performed in the StataMP 15 system. The ratio of the participants are the following: Somogy (107), Baranya (31), Tolna (19). 57% of the respondents were men and 43% women. The majority of respondents were aged 18-30 (36%) and 31-45 (40%), 18% were aged 46-55, and a

further 6% were over 55. According to their education, most of the respondents have some kind of higher education, the total number is 75 (48%), followed by those with secondary education with 60 completions (38%). 17 people (11%) have different professional qualifications and a total of 5 people (3%) have indicated their primary school education.

3. Results and discussion

Our first question was to ask respondents to summarize in a word what they think of a good work atmosphere. The answers you get here are all positive words without exception. Besides personal characteristics such as motivation, esteem, many also emphasize the importance of human relationships. In a good atmosphere not only the individual but also the team develops, the atmosphere will be familiar, cheerful, calm and confidential.

The second question lists the benefits that can be provided at workplace, the main “benefits”, and evaluates them by importance (*Table 2*). These tools are all motivating, health-promoting methods. The majority of respondents clearly consider financial benefits to be the most important. In addition to financial benefits professional appreciation and positive feedback from management are important to others.

Table 2. Importance of workplace benefits on a scale of 1 to 5 (n = 157)

Benefits	Mean	St.dev.
1. High salary	4,45	0,67
2. Professional appreciation	4,43	0,95
3. Cash Reward	4,31	0,87
4. Positive feedback from management	4,25	0,86
5. Extra leave (day off)	4,22	0,93
6. Nomination	4,12	0,96
7. Corporate funded car	3,12	1,22

Source: Own research

The third question is also one of the basic questions of the research, since the solution of every problem starts with first formulating what causes it. *Figure 1* summarizes which factors cause the most stress in the workplace according to respondents.

In the workplace leadership is the biggest stress source today collected by the answers of the participants. Unfortunately this is the factor that can't be changed easily. The main stress source are ensure customer`s satisfaction and workload. It is the job of a good leader to see who is suitable for what, what is the most ideal and most effective job allocation. The best should have the decisive role. Someone e.g. can't stand the futures job, someone isn't fit to be assigned as a cashier. In addition to the problems posed by the job, employees can also become a source of conflict. Leading managers also have a great responsibility in resolving conflicts between subordinates. Unfortunately, there have always been, are and will be employees who prefer to deal with other problems or just want to move forward by oppressing another employee.

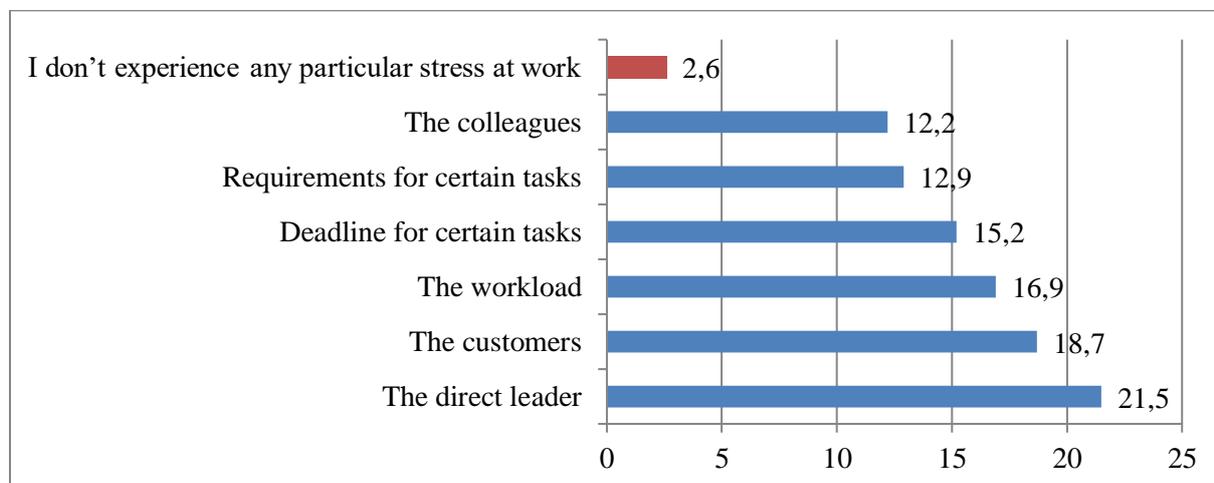


Figure 1. Which factors cause stress in the workplace (n = 157) in percent (%)

Source: Own research

The leader must be able to solve this cases. It is also important to mention that "I do not experience particular stress in my workplace" was marked by only 2.6% of respondents.

The following question provided mixed answers. The majority described his workplace as indifferent or tense (*Table 3*).

Table 3. How do you rate the atmosphere of your workplace? (n = 157)

Qualification of the work atmosphere	%
1. Indifferent	23%
2. Tense	18%
3. Cohesive	18%
4. Friendly	15%
5. Depressing	10%
6. Hostile	8%
7. Motivating	8%
Summary	100%

Source: Own research

Based on these, it is not surprising that 55% of respondents say that they do not like working in their current job, compared to 45% who like their current job. The employer can use several health promotion tools in this case, such as team building trainings, common canteens, joint discussions. The role of leadership and health promotion tools are appreciated in improving the workplace atmosphere. Unfortunately, many have not heard of the concept of health promotion (52% of respondents do not know what belongs here). After listing the main tools, we asked them to sort and find out what is most important to them. What is most important to them. What increases their wellbeing in the workplace? Opinions were significantly scattered (Table 4).

Table 4. Health promotion tools by priority (n = 157)

Health promotion tools	%
Outstanding work grants plus financial benefits	23,1%
Grant of compulsory annual leave	21,7%
Team building programs	14,4%
Employee-friendly offices	12,7%
Appropriate technical equipment: printer, computer	11,4%
Shared dining room, coffee bar	10,5%
Ensuring mandatory free time for sedentary workers	6,2%

Source: Own research

The importance of financial benefits is undeniable, but it is also clear from the survey that a significant proportion of those who saw the need for something more. They need more relaxation and comfort. Shared canteens and cafes provide a great opportunity for employees to develop their relationship with each other, get to know each other better, and thus work together more easily and efficiently. Proper equipment is not just about IT items and general furniture equipment. For an office worker who spends working time sitting down, an ergonomic chair, a table adjusted to the chair, and a keyboard designed for the right hand position are extremely important. The majority of respondents believe that these improvements also have a beneficial and direct effect on their performance: 65% of participants say that these tools has extremely high influence on their effectiveness, 24% say their impact is "High" and only 11% say they have not caused any impact or a small one.

In the following we asked the respondents what workplace health promotion is and how it can affect it (Figure 2). The majority of respondents believe that the introduction of health promotion reduces stress and improves stress management ability. If the atmosphere at work is more pleasant, calmer, more balanced, it will clearly lead to satisfaction. "If I feel good in my skin, it will have a remark on my health as well," they say.



Figure 2. What do you think is the end result of workplace health promotion? (n=157) in percent (%)

Source: Own research

We were also curious about the extent to which these results are present in the workplace (Table 5). What do they experience? The responses indicated that the presence of these methods is on variable level in the workplace. The answer “It appears at an excellent level” was given in a negligible proportion (under 10%). Most responded that these wellbeing factors are negligible, suggesting a low standard of health promotion culture.

Table 5. At what level do workplace health promotion appear in your workplace? (n=157)

Judging the given factor	Some variants of workplace health promotion			
	Improving health and well-being among workers	Improving job satisfaction	Lower stress and improved stress management	Increasing health awareness and better health skills
	%			
Not experienced at all	17%	17%	14%	16%
Weakly	36%	35%	39%	37%
Average (variable)	25%	28%	25%	28%
It appears at a good standard	15%	13%	13%	13%
It appears at an excellent level	6%	7%	8%	6%
Summary	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Own research

4. Conclusion and suggestions

Based on the questionnaire replies it can be stated that among the examined employees, wellbeing at work can be improved by different motivational tools, and wellbeing can also have a positive effect on their work efficiency. The main benefits that are clearly visible from the questionnaire are: high salary, professional esteem and cash rewards. The existence of these aspects is therefore extremely important in a good workplace.

Most of stress is caused by the workload, ensure customer`s satisfaction and the quality of the relationship with the leader. With the right attitude on the part of management and a better division of labor many of these problems can be improved and the level of stress experienced by the employee can be reduced.

The workplace atmosphere can greatly affect a person`s ability to work and their efficiency, so it is advisable to improve this (Dajnoki and István, 2020). The majority of respondents consider a good workplace atmosphere important, as it greatly influences the morale and effectiveness of work (Bencsik, Juhász, & Mura, 2019).

The tools which improve the well-being of employees, are the right technical tools, the offices should be employee-friendly, there should be opportunities for shared meals and cafes, and outstanding performances with extra financial benefits should be also supported. The role of various financial benefits are highlighted. One initiative is the “Smarter Workplace Award” which employees can win based on their level of satisfaction as well as their level of fitness, as part of corporate health programs. Another type of incentive is the “Family-Friendly Workplace” program, which can increase the market value of a workplace, making it more attractive to employees (Csillag and Németh, 2008).

Summary

Numerous studies address the topic of health promotion worldwide. It is now clear that organizations need to have such programs, as they offer tangible benefits and are closely related to corporate performance. The role and responsibility of the leader in this topic is also a key factor, because change must start at the leadership level. Depending on the expectations of the employees, the appropriate health promotion tools can be selected: increased financial benefits, rewards, extra leave, a company car for personal use, a well-equipped office are really valuable motivational tools. In addition, improving the quality of the relationship between managers and subordinates could be a key factor as well. If we feel that the leader recognizes us, counts on us and our opinion, it is often worth more than earnings, all the other incentives. Because: “What could be better than loving what we do, and knowing that it also has a value?” (Katherine Graham)

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