

HOW WORKPLACE STRESS, BUILDING CONDITIONS, AND EMPLOYEE HEALTH ARE INTERTWINED – LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Commerce, the force that drives the United States economy. Work-related stress has a large impact on affecting employee health and well-being. The purpose of this narrative literature review paper is to detail how stress experienced in the workplace not only harms an employee but also can have impacts to a business's reputation and finances. This review aims to show the connection between work stress, the affects it can have on employee health and well-being, how ill employees can reduce the productivity in the workplace, and how employee ill health and reduced business/organization productivity can lead to increased medical care costs and possibly have impacts on the economy as a whole. Evidence suggests that work stress contributes to the health of employees negatively. Chronic work-related stress can lead to physical conditions such as cardiovascular diseases, compromised immune systems, loss of sleep and fatigue, and can contribute to mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression. These health impacts reduce employees' quality of life and can also have negative impacts for businesses. The negative impacts can include increased absenteeism, reduced productivity, increased risk of workplace injury, and higher healthcare cost, all which affect an organization's bottom line. Additionally, high stress levels can cause employee burnout and lead to turnover, further causing an impact to businesses operations and finances. Without healthy employees, businesses potentially take a hit due to lower productivity. After reviewing the literature that is available on the topic of work stress, employee health, and the results it may cause on a business, it is imperative that work stress be addressed properly by business owners and leaders so that a healthier workforce is created and maintained so that employee satisfaction is improved and to have organizational success.

KEYWORDS: work stress, productivity, illness, sick, obesity, wellness

1. Introduction

The United States Department of Commerce creation and mission is to create the conditions for economic growth and opportunities through competitiveness, by strengthening domestic industry, and spur the increase of quality jobs across the country United States Department of Commerce (n.d.). Ecommerce, over the past two decades, has grown considerably,

leading other economic areas while promoting sustainable consumption, higher labor productivity, competitiveness, increased consumer incomes, and GDP growth. This trend is anticipated to persist, positioning e-commerce as a crucial driver of sustainable economic development (Roszko-Wójtowicz et al., 2024). Chronic noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) are a leading cause of disability and premature

death globally, due to the negative effects of NCDs on employee performance and productivity, there is an increasing need for stakeholders to create effective workplace strategies to enhance employee health outcomes (Abdul Aziz & Ong, 2024). Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) kill 41 million people annually, equal to 74% of all deaths globally (WHO, 2023). The work environment influences the well-being of employees and their ability to handle their workload (Priya et al., 2023).

Attaining an effective work-life balance is crucial in today's dynamic world. Having a good work-life balance and a work-health balance between health, family, and career is important to a person's life (Gragnano et al., 2020). While some stress is unavoidable, problems arise when your body repeatedly experiences the physiological changes known as the stress response (Harvard Medical School, 2024). When employees experience stress in the workplace, their physical and mental health can be negatively influenced and lead to decreased career satisfaction (Heckman, 2023). It is reported that workplace stress has caused 120,000 deaths in the United States each year (OSHA, n.d). Organizations that have leaders who are engaging can facilitate a connection and inspire employees to increase their engagement (Schaufeli, 2021). One of the primary duties of a leader is to motivate their employees and doing so can also aide in employee retention (Forbes, 2022). Employers can increase their ability to attract and retain employees by creating a sense of belonging (Forbes, 2023). Employers who foster a supportive attitude towards employees strengthen morale and productivity while adding to the promotion of a positive work environment.

To function as optimally as possible, it is important in any business to have employees who can complete their task with the least amount of stress. A strong company culture is defined as one where employees play a major role (Stohl, 2018).

Stohl further writes healthier employees who can work under a manageable amount of stress will be happier, more positive and can help maintain strong, healthy workplace culture that fosters creativity and is productive. One characteristic of a company that cares about the well-being of their employee's health is one that puts effort in actively reducing the stress in the workplace by implementing stress management programs and policy (Stohl, 2018). Stress management programs that are effective can be a positive contribution towards improving people's health.

2. Problem Statement

The problem being detailed in this study is that workplace stress hurts a person's health and can reduce work productivity (Timotius & Octavius, 2024). Stress may cause or amplify various health problems (Harvard Medical School, 2024). Private industry employers reported an increase in injury (4.5%) and illness (26.1%) in 2022 in comparison to incidents in 2021 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.). Also, 83% of US workers say they suffer from work-related stress daily, with 50% stating they are not engaged at work, which leads to a loss of productivity (Workplace stress, n.d.). Socialists and public health experts assert that working conditions can do to harm a person's health, and that health, wellness, and important aspects such as social and working conditions have been ignored (LaFaye & Sampson, 2024). The general business problem is that work-related stress and work conditions do in fact lead to employee sickness and a variety of health issues. Exposure to demanding working conditions and obesity are known risk factors for ill health and work-related disability (Svärd et al., 2024). The specific business problem is that a stressful work environment can lead to an employee's ill health and lower quality of life, which can cause a business to experience losses due to a reduction in business productivity. The

existence if sickness could be the result of a strained work process that lacks resources, which may cause a loss in resources and hurt recovery (Dietz et al., 2023). With the connection of work stress, employee ill health, and a reduction in productivity, it is possible to mitigate the negative stress cycle (Harvard Medical School, 2024). This research aims to detail the health issues employees deal with as a result of working conditions and stress and how it leads to a reduction in productivity. The research will detail the financial loss, and other risk factors a business may encounter as a result of employee health and lower productivity. Lastly, this research will give recommendations on how businesses can create better working conditions and how employees can improve their health.

3. Purpose and Methodology

The purpose of this narrative literature review is to look at how workplace stress, organizational culture, and building conditions impact employee health and wellness and how both affect the financial performance and overall success of businesses. Taking a look into these aspects, this review strives to highlight the relationships between workplace environments and employee well-being, and how these factors influence productivity, efficiency, and a business's bottom line. The anticipated findings are aimed to provide beneficial recommendations for business's looking to create better working conditions and improve employee health.

This review's method is a narrative literature review approach to synthesize existing research related to workplace stress, employee health, and business productivity. Databases used include (but not limited to) PubMed, ProQuest, and Google Scholar with the basis of the searches being peer-reviewed articles that were published within the last five years. The studies and articles reviewed focused on work stress, working conditions,

employee health and health concerns, and the effects on workplace productivity, finances, and any other risks a business may have to mitigate because of these factors. This researcher used several key terms to illustrate the connection between health and business.

➤ **Key Terms**

- Stress – Defined as a state of worry or mental tension caused by a difficult situation, how people respond to the stress is what makes a difference in a person's well-being (World Health Organization (WHO) #2, 2023).

- Productivity – Output per unit of input (Wirkierman, 2024).

- Sick – A person who:

Has a fever, a measured temperature of 100.4 °F or greater, or feels warm to the touch. Has a history of feeling feverish along with one or more of the following: Skin rash, difficulty breathing, persistent cough, decreased consciousness or confusion of recent onset, new unexplained bruising or bleeding (without a previous injury), persistent diarrhea or vomiting (other than air sickness), headache with stiff neck, appears obviously unwell; or (B) Has a fever that has persisted for more than 48 hours; or (C) Has symptoms or indications of other communicable disease (CFR, n.d.).

- Health – The World Health Organization states "*Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity*" (WHO #3, n.d.).

➤ **Research Design**

This review is led by one main research question and four overarching questions.

➤ **Research Question**

What defines excessive work stress, and how does this influence employee physical and mental health, and what are the subsequent effects on overall work productivity?

➤ **Overarching Questions**

1. What is the definition of excessive work stress, and how is it different from manageable levels of stress?
2. How does excessive work stress affect an employee's physical and mental health, personal life, and overall well-being?
3. What effect(s) does excessive work stress have on work productivity?
4. What relationships, if any, exist between excessive work stress, employee health, and overall workplace outcomes?

These questions are geared toward garnering information and provide analysis in addressing the definition of excessive stress, its impact on health and personal life, its influence on work productivity, and the relationship between stress, health, and workplace outcomes. The data gathered from the literature addressed the research questions, offering an understanding of factors influencing workplace conditions and business outcomes.

4. Significance of this Paper

The significance of this research is to highlight the connection between workplace atmosphere, employee health, and how the two have an effect on businesses bottom line. Employee health is important not just to the person but should be important to the workplace as well. Stress-related illnesses are rampant in Western society, being the source of sick leave and putting a substantial economic burden on employers and society (Wolvetang et al., 2022). Employee health and well-being have increased in importance for businesses over the years, but most businesses do not see the direct link between the health and well-being employees and the work output and quality of the work the employees are producing (Bialowolski et al., 2020). Work stress and work hazards constitute a public health burden which accounts for health issues such as at least 15% of adult-onset asthma and carpal tunnel syndrome (Kreiss & Cummings, 2024).

The relationship between ill employees, workplace stress, lower productivity and the negative affect this cycle has on the economy is another point of significance this research provides. According to 15 US Code 1127, Commerce is described as a course of action where services are rendered, or goods are marked or labeled for sale in areas both foreign and domestic (House.gov, n.d.). America is the world's largest national economy and a global trade leader, diverting production to more competitive sections of the economy increase the productivity of the average American worker, which in turn contributes to higher income levels. (United States Trade Representative, n.d.). On the contrary, long-term sick leave is costly for society and is believed to be a detriment for the sick employee (Standal et al., 2023). It is important for managers to recognize when their employees are sick (Van Buren & Schrempf, 2023). It is difficult for businesses to have sustainable growth when employers (i.e. decision makers or leaders) who can implement change have a primary goal of maximizing production and profits rather than increasing employee well-being (Halima et al., 2023).

One of the reasons why productivity slows down is because of a decline in the contribution (productivity) of capital (goods and services) per worker (Golden et al., 2024). It is hard to be productive when employees are stressed, distracted while working, injured, sick or absent from work for any reason. One factor that contributes to inflation is low productivity, those businesses with the lowest productivity growth have to fully pass this burden on to the prices of their goods or services (Hein, 2024). This research aims to be a blueprint to those in leadership positions and business stakeholders that while revenue is of maximum importance, achieving financial success and a positive return on investment(s) depend in part on the stress level, physical work environment,

management style, and the health and well-being of a company's employees. The cycle of work stress, employee ill-health, low productivity, and higher prices borne to the consumer may serve as a reputational and financial risk to a business.

5. Literature Review

For this literature review, 31 journals and articles were reviewed to gather the information to support the relationship and importance of employee health and business operations for this article. Lower productivity may lead to reputational damage and financial risks due to issues such as customer dissatisfaction, product deadliness being missed, and lower profitability. A preliminary step should be identifying the root cause of the business's actions (McIntosh & Plakon, 2024). Root base cause research find that the most crucial factors that have an impact on productivity are quality, work environment, safety, time, company results, customer satisfaction, productivity, deliverability, resource utilization, profit, process flow, plannability, machine health and reputation (Soares et al., 2022). A study performed in 2024 (Magnavita et al., 2024) indicates there are two types of stress: extrinsic job stress, which is defined as the difference between effort and compensation, and intrinsic stress, which is attributed to overcommitment. Worry about negative working conditions, also referred to as annoyance, accompanied with extrinsic stress and overcommitment are factors that are strongly associated with reduced work ability. Low work ability conventionally has been linked to stress (Magnavita et al., 2024).

A review of literature and studies on the health-related conditions gives a glimpse on how work-stress is interconnected to employee health.

A study summarizing published studies evaluating productivity loss among U.S. employees with various health conditions reveal that pain is the most common cause, accounting for 24% of lost

work productivity (Rojanasarot et al., 2023). Other diseases and sicknesses that contribute to lost work productivity include cancer (22%), chronic lung disease (17%), cardiometabolic disease (16%), and depression (16%). This same study states employees on average lose up to 80 additional work hours annually, with cancer and cardiometabolic disease associated with the highest losses. Work impairment ranged from 10% to 70%, with pain and depression causing the greatest impairment. The annual incremental costs of lost productivity varied from \$100 to \$10,000, with higher costs linked to cancer, pain, and depression (Rojanasarot et al., 2023).

The specific causes of depression remain uncertain, but a contributing factor that has been identified is environmental (Zhang et al., 2023). Sick Building Syndrome (SBS) is an environmental factor that refers to symptoms caused by exposure to harmful elements connected to building usage. The well-being, health, and work productivity of individuals in indoor environments are crucial areas of study, specifically related to SBS. Common complaints include headaches, fatigue, the feeling of discomfort, and nausea (Niza, 2023). Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), also referred to as chronic diseases, are typically long-lasting conditions that stem from a combination of genetic, physiological, environmental, and behavioral factors (WHO, n.d.). The World Health Organization (WHO) states the primary categories of NCDs are cardiovascular diseases (heart attacks and strokes), cancers, chronic respiratory conditions (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and asthma), and diabetes.

Ischemic heart disease (IHD) is the leading cause of death globally among noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), accounting for 9.14 million deaths in 2019 (Shu et al., 2024). Cardiovascular diseases account for most NCD deaths, or 17.9 million people annually, followed by

cancers (9.3 million), chronic respiratory diseases (4.1 million), and diabetes (2.0 million including kidney disease deaths caused by diabetes) (WHO, n.d). Rapid economic growth and social progress have caused a strong increased prevalence of risk factors, including hypertension, hyperlipidemia, diabetes, obesity, and aging, which collectively account for the majority of IHD-related deaths (Shu et al., 2024).

When taking the temperature of employee's health and wellness, mental health is as important as physical health. Greenwood & Anas (2021) state mental health has had a stigma attached to it but also has a connecting relationship to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Mental health support has changed from a workplace option to a necessity. A workplace cultural change needs to occur for employees to have a mentally healthy workplace that they should come to expect (Greenwood & Anas, 2021). Organizations that have a positive culture and appreciate how important work-life balance is can help employees maintain well-being and job satisfaction (Hogan, 2024).

Having a good balance between health, wellness, family, and career is important to the stability of a person's life and productivity at work. When employees face workplace stress or feel underrated, it can diminish their well-being, potentially leading to workplace challenges such as difficulty completing tasks and increased turnover (Gallup, n.d.). The connection between a healthy work culture and business is that a healthy work culture attracts more qualified employees and enhances productivity (Hogan, 2024). Creating such an environment does require the efforts of leaders and employees. According to Schaufeli (2021), a key responsibility of a leader is to motivate employees, which can support employee retention. Organizations with engaging leaders are better equipped to foster connections and inspire employees to enhance their engagement. Organizations

that implement social responsibility also improves a business's reputation over time (Bettayeb & Al-Hawari, 2024).

In order to function as optimally as possible, it is important for any business to have employees who can complete their task with the least amount of pressure and stress. Ignoring issues may lead to missed deadlines, kindling resentment, and unsuccessful business initiatives (Cole, 2023). Taking actions to work with staff members and addressing issues can create a better working environment that is beneficial for both the organization and its employee. Companies that have a positive work environment have a long-lasting effect on all levels on employment and can have a 21% higher profit (Herbert, 2023). One characteristic of a company that cares about the well-being of their employee's health is one that puts effort in actively reducing the stress in the workplace by implanting stress management programs and policy (Stohl, 2018). A strong course of action aimed to change the character of a stressful work environment for the better can occur when managers and employees make positive changes within themselves first. The next recommended step that should take place is to develop a routine where the staff as whole work together collectively in identifying issues in the workplace sooner rather than later.

When taking the temperature of employee's health and wellness, mental health is as important as physical health. Greenwood and Anas states mental health has had an attached long standing negative stigma attached to it, but from the literature on work-stress, it appears anyone can be subjected to impacts to their mental health because of work stress. Literature also infers that mental health support has changed from a workplace option to a workplace necessity. When adopting a workplace that is good for employee's physical health and wellness, a workplace cultural change needs to occur for work environments to have a mentally healthy

workplace that workforces should come to expect (Greenwood & Anas, 2021). According to a new study, men who report specific types of work-related stress are faced with a higher risk of heart disease over those who do not deal with such stress (Corliss, 2023).

It is imperative that businesses recognize various facets that can pose a threat to their workforce. One of those facets are environmental factors, which can include the condition of a physical location of business, and behavioral factors of others that can cause the stress an employee endures while at work. A book by Christiansen et al. (2024) states a medical sociologist by the name of Talcott Parsons made arguments that persons deemed sick or ill have an exemption from completing their ordinary roles and responsibilities duties that their only responsibility is to seek medical attention. With this logic, sick employees' duties are either left for others to complete or are left undone all together, both examples of reduced productivity for a business. Christiansen's book further states the endocrine system releases hormones that prepare the human body for action. During stressful situations, the endocrine system serves as a defense. When overused, the process of adjusting damages the body's immune system. Measuring the severity of damage to the endocrine system is based on what is called an allostatic load. The process in its entirety of emotional and physiological changes over time and their consequences is the definition of a field of study called psychoneuroimmunology. These characteristics of life all together reinforces the need to assist people manage their stress levels, reduce the allostatic load, which directly leads to the prevention of chronic diseases (Christiansen et al., 2024).

A study by Gregory & Moates (2023) on the negative relationship between work stress and employee health found that for those have careers that require constant efforts from employees, the stress factor

takes a significant physical and mental toll on those employees (Gregory & Moates, 2023). Work-life balance is a term spoken of in a variety of businesses, but increased stress levels at work is still a concern that impacts employees in a multitude of ways. Stress, emergencies, toxic chemicals and workplace violence are all examples of hazards, risks are different from hazards alone because risks represent the probability of damage caused by hazards. For example, those persons who are financial analysts can have lucrative salaries along with the space for career growth, but they often experience intense stress. Moritz Erhardt, a 21-year-old intern for Morgan Stanley & Goldman Sachs, died after allegedly working for three days straight without sleep (Hope et al., 2021). A change Morgan Stanley & Goldman Sachs made after this tragedy was implementing paid sabbaticals and reduced working hours for interns to address the pressures of this position. Businesses need to address stress, hazards, and risk in the workplace in a proactive manner in order to reduce the severity of a hazard turning into a risk. Capitol Police Officers committed suicide after the Capitol riots in 2021, their deaths are a prime example of how what is perceived as a low probability occurrence of an incident, when it does actually happen, how it can have devastating outcomes (Buresh, 2022). During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the head of the emergency department at a New York hospital and an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) committed suicide after working for days on the front line of the coronavirus fight. This doctor's father, who is also a doctor, stated his daughter tried to do her job and the job killed her, just two days prior, an EMT committed suicide with his retired policeman father's gun (Rosner & Sheehy, 2020). Understanding the difference between hazards and risks and implementing strategies to minimize them, organizations can create safer, healthier

workplaces that prioritize both productivity and employee well-being.

Another example of a business whose actions were not only working conditions were not only stressful to the employees, but the physical conditions also fostered issues that caused reputational risk damage that is still appearing to exist today is the Smithfield Food organization. Smithfield Foods is reported to have high rates of injury, dismemberment, death to employees, and exhibited inhumane treatment of animals (Fox, 2024). It is reported that the Smithfield Food factory operated in such close confinement that concentrated number of animals created a breeding ground for the spread of disease and with the space cages took up, it made it harder to disinfect areas (Fox, 2024). During the pandemic, a Smithfield Foods facility served as a breeding ground for COVID-19. The Smithfield Foods Sioux Falls, South Dakota location was cited by OSHA *“for failing to protect employees from exposure to the coronavirus”*, the federal agency concluded 1,294 employees contracted COVID-19 and four employees died (Michaels et al., 2024). It is reported that the effects of COVID-19 hit Smithfield during the second quarter of 2020 causing the company to report operating at a \$72 million loss (Freese, 2020). With a workplace facility reported to already being unclean, a place present for disease transmission for animals and humans highlights unsafe practices that damaged Smithfield Foods reputation and increased its financial risks. In the fall of 2024, approximately 500 medical resident doctors and interns threatened to strike at George Washington University Hospital because of the struggles described as including uncontrolled burnouts, extreme exhaustion and financial stress. On December 17, 2024, a strike that was scheduled to start the morning of December 18, 2024, was averted. The new working contract was agreed upon, that included a large pay

increase and a \$1,000 annual stipend for mental health and physician wellness (Arancibia, 2024). When working conditions are bad to the point of a threatened employee strike, the news coverage alone can serve as a hit to an organization’s reputation. The drivers for Amazon began to strike in December 2024. They are protesting for better working conditions and pay, and for Amazon to recognize them as company employees (Towfighi, 2024). Coupled with the time it will take to mend the relationship with the employees, paying hospital patients and Amazon customers may also be apprehensive about being utilizing the services of each of these establishments. These two strikes are examples of why American businesses lose \$359 billion annually, mainly due to the impact of unresolved conflict, and that resolving disputes sooner rather than later benefits an organizations employees’ well-being as well as the company’s financial health (Coles, 2023).

The type of working hours/shifts an employee is required to work has its effects on employee well-being also. Leaders in business have control over when employees work and need to understand the risks and impacts various types of shifts have on their employees. There are differences that affect the body in various ways when comparing daytime non-shift work to night-time shift work. A study conducted gathered evidences aimed to present evidence of the potential relationship between working shifts at night and the risk of stroke. Workers who worked shifts at night had a 1.08 times higher risk of stroke than non-shift/night workers (Jin et al., 2024). A study on public employees disclosed that work ability can improve with age, highlighting that health and safety measures, workplace promotion and preventive initiatives, have a greater impact on work ability than just the passage of time (Magnavita et al., 2024).

There is a connection between work-stress, adverse employee health, medical bills, and bankruptcy which is an effect on the economy. The less people are able to pay for services, prices potentially increase which affects others who need said services. Employees who are stressed may develop conditions that require treatment from medical professionals. The less people are able to pay for services, prices potentially increase which affects others who need said services. A thesis by Grace Barrett (2024) states that people with medical bills are more likely to struggle to pay for other necessities, have higher risk of bankruptcy and as of 2021, people owed \$88 billion dollars in medical debt (Barrett, 2024). A study was performed by (Bialowolski et al., 2020) to compare the relationship of productivity loss for health-related reasons and from distracted employees in the workplace. The data collected was from 3,258 employees (2,775 office and 483 manufacturing) from a major US manufacturer with revenue of \$6 billion, monetary loss in productivity due to sick-related absenteeism and distraction among office and factory floor employees was assessed. Total productivity costs, in terms of yearly gross income, were calculated as the average of products of productivity loss measured at the employee level (due to health-related absenteeism and due to distraction at work) considering gross annual compensation of employees. According to this study, data reported by a U.S. manufacturing company annual productivity loss was estimated at almost \$41 million for manufacturing and \$282 million for office employees, yielding a yearly organizational productivity loss of almost \$323 million. Of this, average productivity loss due to health-related absenteeism amounted to \$16 million, compared with \$307 million due to distraction-induced productivity loss. The organization reported an annual turnover of \$6 billion (Bialowolski et al., 2020).

Are there remedies employees can do in order to reduce the effects of stress in their lives? Yes, there are steps employees can take both professionally and personally in order to reduce the effects of stress has on their health and well-being. Resilience is a concept that lends itself to the area of health promotion and well-being. Resilience is defined as the capacity to encounter or recuperate crises or adversity, ta healthy flexibility to adapt and prevail over adverse circumstances (Standal et al., 2023). There are a few scales that measure resilience, one being the Resilience Scale for Adults (RSA), which can measure indicators such as pain, people with chronic illness, and on a lesser researched area of long-term sickness or return to work (RTW) (Standal et al., 2023). Although the article that details Original Resilience Scale for Adults (RSA) created by Friborg and his colleagues was published in 2003, it is being referenced in this article for its historical data and serves as a baseline for self-evaluation methods. The RSA method consists of five areas: Personal Competence, Social Competence, Family Coherence, Social Support, and Personal Structure (Friborg et al., 2003). The Resilience Scale for Adults analyzes internal and external factors believed to increase a person's ability to adapt to psychosocial challenges (Chang et al., 2024). The five factors of the RSA measurement scale are rated using a Likert scale, the range is from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

The subscales depict different aspects of resilience:

- **Personal Competence:** Measures self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-liking.

- **Social Competence:** Assesses social skills and the ability to establish and maintain social relationships.

- **Family Coherence:** Evaluates the supportive and cohesive aspects of the family environment.

➤ **Social Support:** Measures perceived availability and quality of social support from friends and significant others.

➤ **Personal Structure:** Assesses planning, organization, and goal orientation (Friborg et al., 2003; Julian et al. 2020).

After reviewing the information that is readily available, the connection between work culture, stress, employee health, and business success is clear and should be addressed and monitored in order for a business to achieve more and for employees to have a better quality of life.

6. Recommendations

➤ It is recommended that leaders and stakeholders understand that occupational

stress is a chronic illness, they need to learn the history of the stress' existence, create strategies to protect, prevent and intervene against these occurrences taking place in their business and towards their staff (Raišienė et al., 2023).

➤ Leaders should have plans, standard operating procedures, or a blueprint suitable for each of their operations. By creating detailed procedures using a Prevention through Design method (pictured below) before performing tasks can reduce or prevent occupational injuries, illnesses, and fatalities by minimizing hazards and risks (NIOSH, n.d.).



Figure no. 1: *Prevention through Design*
(Source: Centers for Disease Control, (NIOSH, n.d.))

➤ Operating a organization is a complex, leaders can use a Social Exchange Theory (SET), a framework on how organizations operate and how employees behave, to explain behavior in both long-term and short-term interactions with employees (Bettayeb & Al-Hawari, 2024).

➤ It is recommended that leaders of organizations set the tone for the type of

workplace environment they want to see reflected from their employees. Leaders should communicate the organizations vision clearly and have open lines of communication with their staff. Leaders must display the values and ethics they want to see in their employees. Employees should clearly understand the organization's vision and values. Promoting

a workplace culture of open communication enables employees to share ideas and provide feedback without reluctance (Hogan, 2024).

➤ Leaders should give reasonable accommodations to employees with documented health conditions. Cultivating effective communication with team members, management, and workers is vital to ascertain if a workplace is safe for employees and identifying what preventative measures may be appropriate (Halima et al., 2023).

➤ Leaders should be advocates for positive change. If employees witness practices that are conflicting with the company culture, they should be able to raise their concerns. Having employees that take the initiative to suggest improvements shows responsibility and their devotion to the company's values (Hogan, 2024).

➤ Employers and occupational health professionals should work together when developing strategies to mitigate workplace environmental exposures (Sterud et al., 2024).

➤ Leaders should provide employees with enough time and the proper support they need to heal from their illness or

injury. Proper support can include encouraging rehabilitation (professional medical treatment), encouraging the employee obtain the adequate amount of sleep and promoting physical activity to assist in healing and reduce stress. Using tools such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) a method that is an effective option for managing stress and recovery in the workplace. CBT is a recognized first-line treatment for a variety of psychological conditions. Thoughts and behaviors can both bring on and alleviate stress in the workplace. Integrating CBT in an organization, leaders can address stress causing factors effectively, thus supporting employees return to work which will boost productivity (Xu et al., 2024).

➤ It is recommended that leaders and employees are to self-evaluate using tools such as the Resilience Scale for Adults (RSA). Evidence suggest that implementing RSA may help reduce the impact of stress on mental health. Using a tool like this for self-evaluation can promote better balance in life and help minimize the response to stress (Palamarchuk & Vaillancourt, 2021).

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