



Preventing Psychological Hazards, Violence, and Harassment as Well as Stress, and Taking the Appropriate Precautions

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Abstract: *The essay addresses a number of topics, including reducing stress, psychological dangers, aggression and harassment, safeguards offered by labor laws, and safeguarding employees in a variety of industries from the risk of infection during an epidemic. requirements for experts in labor protection.*

Keywords: *Stress, psychological risk, violence, infectious diseases, the threat of injury or damage to human health, workload.*

Introduction. Infectious illness outbreaks have regularly happened around the world during the past 20 years, each one marked by a high rate of population infection. Due in part to global connectivity, increased air travel, and urbanization, epidemics that were once localized to certain regions are now spreading at a rate that has never been seen before. When there is no immunity, pathogens that have been there for a while can resurface and start an epidemic, endangering the populace. Accordingly, 24 such localized epidemics of this sort have been noted globally since 1976 before the 2014 start of the Ebola epidemic (WHO, 2018). Fortunately, preventative and control strategies have been in place and are frequently employed for a number of well-known epidemic diseases, including cholera, AIDS, influenza, meningitis, tuberculosis, malaria, the zika virus, and yellow fever.

Different people respond differently to stress in an emergency. Increased anxiety, a bad mood, lack of motivation, and depressed thoughts are some psychological symptoms of stress. The entire population is under a great deal of stress when a disease like Covid-19 breaks out, and this stress can have a negative impact on mental health, especially if a mandatory self-isolation regime at home is instituted. Psychological risks for employees may result from their situation's unpredictability in the present or the future or from modifications to the way their jobs are organized and produced.

Main part. During a pandemic, a variety of circumstances, such as the following, can lead to stress for many workers:

- worry about their personal safety or the safety of family members and coworkers who might contract the disease;
- Not wearing personal protection equipment;
- a lack of social networks or support;
- a tension between the need to assist others and established preventive measures (such as self-isolation and social withdrawal after funerals);
- trouble maintaining a healthy lifestyle, which includes working out, eating right, and getting enough rest.



The lack of knowledge regarding the long-term effects of contact with virus-infected individuals as well as the worry of contracting the illness at work and then spreading it to your loved ones can be additional sources of stress.

Emergency personnel experience increased stress when a disease outbreak like Covid-19 occurs because of the stringent safety precautions and protocols put in place to keep them from contracting the disease. These precautions include physical strain brought on by wearing bulky protective gear, being physically isolated, etc. The workload for emergency personnel is also significantly increased at the same time, which could be made worse by the potential for staff reductions due to illness or quarantine. Many of these employees perform employment that already entails a lot of stress. They frequently work shifts without breaks and longer than the typical 40-hour work week during an outbreak.

Other workers, such as those employed in vital products manufacturers, delivery services, transportation, security, and law enforcement, can also be observed to have increasing workloads and shorter rest periods. High workloads and little downtime can make people more exhausted and stressed out, which can have a severe effect on their personal lives and their mental health. Stress and exhaustion can also raise the likelihood of accidents and injury.

Experience has also demonstrated that an outbreak may be followed by increased physical and psychological harassment and violence, aggravating societal stigmatization and discrimination. The perception that a person has a sickness can lead to labeling, stereotypes, discrimination, and/or status loss. People of specific racial and ethnic backgrounds have been subjected to societal stigma during the current Covid-19 pandemic, as well as those who were thought to have come into touch with virus carriers. Discriminatory conduct has also been reported. People who work in environments and professions where there is a significant risk of infection may experience stigma and discrimination, which causes them to be excluded from the community and increases the violence and harassment that is directed at them. Violence against healthcare professionals and anyone who are directly involved in delivering services to patients and their families might result from the high mortality brought on by particular epidemics, the worry and ambiguity around symptoms, the unavailability of diagnostics, immunizations, and treatments.

A rise in violence towards those implementing these restrictions (such law enforcement agents) or selling or carrying vital products might result from restrictions on freedom of movement paired with shortages of those goods.

There is a list of precautions that must be taken in order to prevent work-related stress, which in an epidemic can also spread to other workers, in the WHO and ILO's (2018) guide on preserving the health of medical professionals and emergency workers. These actions consist of the following:

- ✓ conducting appropriate briefings and communicating current information to staff members, which assures awareness and fosters confidence;
- ✓ Ensuring that employees have the chance to voice concerns and request information about the health dangers they and their coworkers experience;
- ✓ Holding interdisciplinary meetings to pinpoint issues, such as those affecting staff wellbeing, and to collaborate on developing solutions;
- ✓ fostering a culture inside the organization that is sensitive to other people's worries, given that the outbreak may affect the families of field employees;
- ✓ creating a check list to evaluate and comprehend your strengths, flaws, and limitations, including identifying your own and other people's indicators of stress and nervous tiredness;



- ✓ Regulation of rest intervals and the adoption of enough breaks during the working day; Creation of a system of friendly mutual aid to provide psychological support and combat stress and nervous weariness;
- ✓ providing possibilities for healthy lives, such as encouraging employees to exercise and eat well;
- ✓ - giving staff members the chance to anonymously express their worries and receive psychological support;
- ✓ staging role-playing exercises in which managers take the place of employees to demonstrate how to operate in a way that reduces stress;
- ✓ the creation of campaigns to combat stigmatization, eliminate the social exclusion of health workers brought on by the populace's excessive fear of contracting an illness, and foster gratitude among people for the men and women fighting the epidemic on the front lines, so that they feel proud of their work;
- ✓ Using humor and interactive techniques to foster conversation, uncover novel solutions, and inspire optimistic mental attitudes.

Conclusion. Adopted occupational health and safety measures should improve worker mental health and well-being while reducing the danger of long-term repercussions. These measures should also prevent and reduce psychological risks, such as the risk of aggression and harassment. Occupational health and safety experts are crucial in ensuring that workers and their management have access to accurate information about the disease's symptoms and personal precautions (such as guidelines for coughing and sneezing, hand washing, isolation in case of illness, etc.) during an outbreak. They ought to assist employers with risk assessment (e.g., identifying infectious and non-infectious hazards and evaluating associated risks; putting in place countermeasures and prevention measures; keeping an eye on and controlling them); and developing or revising a prevention, containment, infection minimization, and recovery plan.

Recommendation:

- The range of production settings for which recommendations must be made is one of the key issues facing labor protection professionals. This covers the working circumstances of those supplying critical services, such as medical professionals and emergency personnel;
- In order to reduce the effects of the health crisis on the workplace, a variety of factors must be considered, and in this regard, labor protection remains the primary tool designed to safeguard employees' health, even when the general public's health is at risk;
- create novel forms of personal protection gear.

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