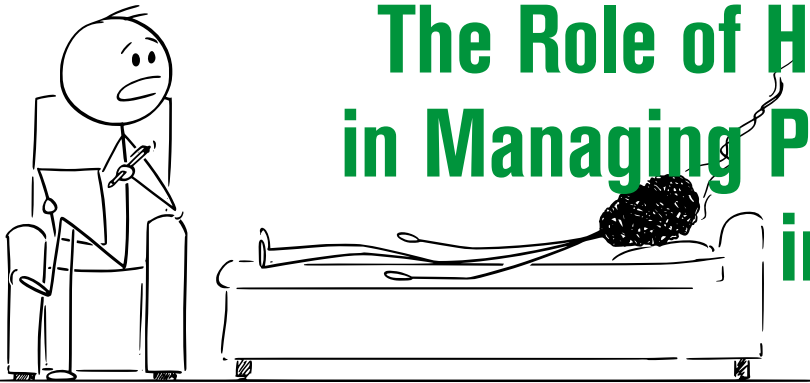


BY VANESSA N. CHIBANDA, M. MARE (WWW.PPRC.CO.ZA)

The Role of Human Resources in Managing Psychosocial Risk in the Workplace.



Mata Greenwood (2001) in ILO Bulletin of Labour Statistics stipulates that an average person spends one third of their life at work hence it is of paramount importance to ensure that the work environment is healthy as possible as this has a correlation with the overall well-being of an individual. One important factor to note in managing human resources are the psychosocial risks experienced within the work place. Psychosocial risks are factors within the work place and the work we do, that can negatively impact on workers' psychological and physical health or put even more simply, have a negative impact on physical, mental, cognitive or emotional health.

Human resources responsibilities are not just about preventing discrimination, harassment or bullying or other well established HR tasks, but also recognising the aspects of our lives that impact performance. Such aspects include bereavement, illness, unstable homes, amongst others. It is therefore the role of human resources to manage these aspects.

Work load is a psychosocial risk factor which can be influenced by work overload or under load, machine pacing work as well as high levels of time pressure. Arnold Bakker (2021) is of the view that, work under load (including monotonous, under stimulating and meaningless tasks) increases work related stress and has negative effects on health, well-being and on job satisfaction. Therefore, the role of the human resources is to adjust and redistribute work assignments to ensure that workers receive appropriate amount of work, taking into consideration their individual capacity.

Leka and Cox (2008) identify psychosocial risks as social and organisational problems that give rise to potential psychosocial and physical injuries that emerge by the administration and arrangements of the management related to working life. Low participation in decision making, lack of control on work load as a psychosocial risk factor affects an employee. To this end, the role human resources is to share purpose and values with workers, as this is what will give them the sense of belonging they need in this context.

Human resources role is to train managers and supervisors on how to detect violence and harassment at work and how, as far as possible, to identify signs that may suggest that a worker is a victim of domestic violence. Jane Mullen and Kevin Kelloway (2009) state that workers engaged in and informed about current situations and important decisions play an active role in detecting and effectively solving problems.

An example of harassment at work could be in the form of how one is dressed and how their body are physically built in both the genders. This can affect one's physical and cognitive of emotional health. Therefore, the role of Human Resources, is to train the workers on how to dress properly when at the work place and also to appreciate or diversify themselves in working with all genders without physically harassing them.

Victims of domestic violence can be affected mentally and even emotionally when they are at work. Carlson (2000) states that work- family conflict will give rise to fall in job satisfaction and organisational commitment, fall in quality of life, thus causing decline of life satisfaction and cause employee turnover rate to increase.

Therefore, the role of human resources is to raise awareness about the effects of domestic violence and inform all staff about public mitigation measures where they exist.

Leka and Cox (2008) state that another terminology for bullying and harassment yet which does not include physical violence aspect is mobbing. Mobbing stands as one of the excessive forms of source of social stress in work life. According to Leymann (1996), psychological terror or mobbing involves continuous hostile or unethical behaviour of one or more individuals in the work life of a co-worker into helpless and vulnerable position. Therefore, the possible main activities to fight against mobbing as human resources is to provide all the workers and administrators within the organisation to understand the importance of this matter and get them trained in this subject.

Social support as a role of the human resources in managing psychosocial risk in the work place entails introducing mechanisms to cope with stress, reducing the detrimental effects of stress on health outcomes. According to Stanfeld Stephen, (2006) social support has a positive effect on job satisfaction. Social support includes a range of mechanisms including practical help and assistance, encouragement, appreciation, comfort, emotional support, providing information to help in problem solving, advice and so on. These sources of social support are co-workers, supervisors, managers, family members and friends.

Additionally, according to Leka S. and Cox, T. (2008) the role of human resources in managing psychosocial risks in the work place is to provide workers with the support and equipment they need to safely perform their work. This includes any training and coaching they might need about occupational safety and health (OSH) measures implemented at the work place, as well as about how to use online systems or work remotely.

Many groups of workers are more at risk of suffering from vulnerability and increased job insecurities, with negative consequences on their mental health and well-being. These include persons with disabilities and young persons who

are already facing higher rates of unemployment and underemployment. According to Francis Greene (2019) due to the fear of losing their jobs and their income, workers may be reluctant to ask for support, raise occupational safety health (OSH) concerns, or may adopt unhealthy working practices with the aim of pleasing managers and supervisors (for example long working hours, increased work load).

As human resources, it is important to encourage workers, supervisors and managers to communicate openly during times of workplace uncertainty by having regular meetings, corresponding by email and engaging in group projects. Also encouraging workers involved in lay-offs or returning to work with shorter hours to take advantage of the time available to improve their skills, including by offering training opportunities.

Psychosocial risks and work related stress are associated with unhealthy behaviours, including heavy alcohol consumption, increased cigarette smoking, poor eating habits, less frequent physical exercise and irregular sleep patterns. All these behaviours may affect both physical and mental health thus having a negative impact on job performance. Human resources can inform and educate workers about alcohol and drugs, including alcohol and drug related problems, measures to prevent such problems from occurring and services available to assist workers, both within and outside the enterprise (including information, counselling, treatment and rehabilitation programmes).

In conclusion, the role of the human resources in managing psychosocial risks in the work place is not only of preventing discrimination, harassment, mobbing or bullying or other established tasks but to recognise the aspects of workers lives that impact performance and these include offering training opportunities to lay-offs workers, share purpose and values with workers for them to have a sense of belonging, provide social support, equip co-workers with the equipment the need to safely perform their work among others as purported in the above article.

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