

Economic consequences of mental health issues in high-stress professions

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World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2025, 26(03), 1415-1418

Publication history: Received on 26 April 2025; revised on 07 June 2025; accepted on 09 June 2025

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2025.26.3.2272>

Abstract

This article examines the economic consequences of mental health problems among workers in high-stress professions. The impact of stress on labor productivity, increased illness rates, employee turnover, and the likelihood of mistakes and accidents is analyzed. The importance of considering employees' mental health to maintain efficiency and reduce economic losses is emphasized. The article highlights the need for implementing measures aimed at improving the psycho-emotional well-being of workers in order to minimize negative consequences and enhance overall labor productivity.

Keywords: Economic consequences; Mental health; Stress; High-stress professions; Labor productivity

1. Introduction

Psychiatric illness in the workplace is an integral part of the life of most employees today. It is particularly acute for high-stress occupations (HSO), which expose employees to chronic emotional and physical stress. Long-term stress-induced mental illnesses not only inhibit workers' overall health but also significantly impact their work performance, leading to unprecedented economic losses.

The relevance of this problem research is founded on its multi-faceted nature. HSO's mental health problems are a source of higher sick leaves, lower productivity, higher error and accident rates, and high employee turnover. These have a direct impact not only on the financial performance of individual companies but on the economy at large. The purpose of this article is to explore the economic effects of mental health problems among HSO employees.

2. Main part Definition and classification of high-stress occupations

Professions categorized as HSO comprise professional jobs that are typically exposed to intense and often extended stressful situations. These represent a very high level of responsibility, emotional strain, and physical exertion in their jobs. In these instances, psychological stress could be the result of a variety of factors. First of all, there are organizational factors, such as long hours of work, stressful work, lack of resources, and poor managerial support. Interpersonal and social determinants, including low social support, high conflict at work, low team functioning, and poor relationships with colleagues and supervisors, are major contributors to stress.

Physical conditions, poor work environment, work burden, poor resting conditions, sleep deprivation, etc., and other factors also contribute to stress accretion. HSO can be categorized according to different criteria. Among the most common is the recognition of professions in which employees are subjected to a high rate of stressors, e.g., physical exertion, interaction with people in crisis, or a great extent of responsibility (table 1).

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Table 1 Types of HSO [1, 2]

Profession	Stress factors	Mental health consequences
Doctors, nurses	Long working shifts, working with patients in critical conditions, high responsibility.	Emotional burnout, depression, anxiety.
Firefighters, rescuers	Working in hazardous conditions, the need to make quick decisions, physical overload.	Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety disorders.
Financial workers	Stress due to market instability, responsibility for financial decisions.	Anxiety disorders, depression, insomnia.
Traders	High risks, rapid decision-making.	Depression, anxiety disorders, sleep problems.
Police officers	Working in extreme situations, life-threatening conditions, high responsibility.	Depression, PTSD, emotional burnout.

As the author opinions, HSO are also characterized by extreme physical and emotional stress, leading to a variety of mental health complications for the employees. Regardless of the type of profession, one of the common denominators among all the cases is the feeling of high responsibility and the necessity to work in conditions of uncertainty. These are primary sources of stress, which make deep impressions on employees' mental health. Its impact varies from short-term emotional disorders to long-term mental diseases.

The prevalence of illnesses in employees in such jobs is significantly higher than the general average within the population as a whole. Research indicates that over 40% of medical staff experience symptoms of burnout, and levels of PTSD in police officers and soldiers as high as 20-30%. Besides, depression and anxiety disorders are particularly common among financial and transport workers, in whom stress due to the need to make important decisions in conditions of uncertainty is a typical precipitant of mental disorders [3].

Thus, stress in HSO has a huge impact on the psychological well-being of workers, and requires measures to reduce the emotional burden as well as enhancing mental well-being at work.

2.1. Economic consequences of mental health issues in high-stress occupations

The economic burden of mental disorders among HSO employees can be classified under several categories, each with significant financial implications for employers and society as a whole. The most tangible of these is the cost of premature retirement or resignation due to mental disorders. Very high levels of workers experiencing chronic stress, depression, or other psychiatric illnesses may fail to fulfill their work responsibilities effectively, which contributes to premature exit from the labor force. Premature exit loses veteran experts from workplaces, increasing organizational economic costs because of talent attrition and the need to engage in repeated hiring and development of replacements.

Another key component of economic losses is the cost of treatment and rehabilitation of workers with mental disorders. Treatment of psychiatric disorders involves a lot of financial expenditure, such as the cost of medical consultations, psychotherapy sessions, and more intense and costly interventions, such as hospitalization and long-term rehabilitation [4].

Another significant feature is the reduction of work productivity among workers with mental disorders. Depression and stress have been known to result in poor concentration, poor cognitive skills, absence of motivation, and exhaustion, all of which bring about a decline in work quality [5].

Employees suffering from stress and mental diseases are also likely to make detrimental decisions, in certain businesses having a higher chance of work accidents and professional errors. Another important economic consequence is increased employee turnover due to mental disorders. New hiring has specific costs, such as job advertisements, interviews, and onboarding and training for new employees.

As a result, economic losses of mental health problems in HSO are direct and indirect losses that have the potential to affect significantly the financial well-being of organizations and society as a whole.

2.2. Methods for managing mental health in high-stress occupations

Mental health issues in HSO require a comprehensive approach that includes both organizational and individual measures to support employees' well-being (fig. 1).

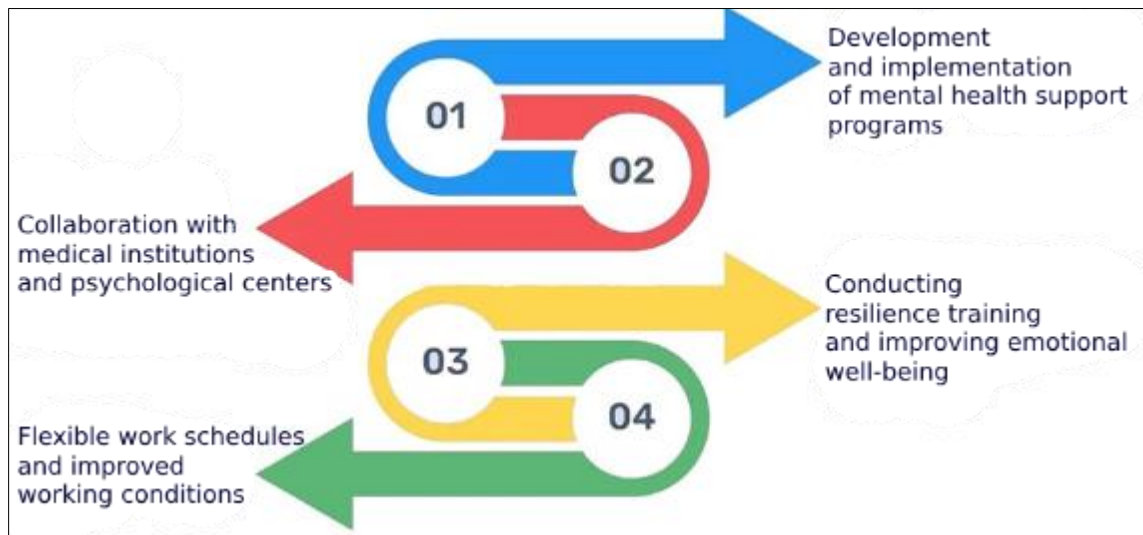


Figure 1 Methods for managing mental health in HSO

One of the best ways to monitor employees' mental health is through the development and implementation of programs for mental well-being. Programs consist of many activities, including consultations with a psychologist and a psychotherapist, training and workshops for promoting emotional well-being, and follow-up on the condition of the mental state as well as occasional surveys of employees.

External sources of support are also necessary, such as partnerships with hospitals and psychological centers providing services to workers when needed. For example, the American company Apple integrates psychological support services into its health insurance plan, allowing workers to receive professional treatment for mental illnesses without having to pay significant amounts of money [6].

Another effective strategy is resilience training and emotional well-being development programs. These programs allow workers to acquire skills in relaxation, emotion regulation, concentration, and stress management. Such training can include practical workshops in meditation and relaxation, as well as training in the application of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) skills to challenge negative thinking.

Flexible working times and improved working conditions are needed preventative stress interventions. They enable staff members to balance workloads according to personal situations, reducing stress levels and averting burnout.

Thus, the creation of conditions for the reconciliatory equilibrium between professional and personal life becomes an increasing need in modern corporations. For example, in the USA, General Electric has developed the GE Cares program, which involves managerial training in stress management skills and psychological counseling [7].

In Russia, Sberbank has launched the Employee Care program, which provides mental well-being assistance in the form of psychological support services, stress management training, and the formation of a healthy lifestyle. Special attention is given to the provision of flexible working conditions, making it convenient for employees to combine work and personal life [8].

Implementation of sound prevention techniques for stress and mental health care in stressful occupations is a significant step toward guaranteeing the well-being of workers and increasing productivity. Mental health assistance programs, resilience training, improved working conditions, and making work-life balance easy come a long way in reducing stress levels as well as preventing its negative effects.

3. Conclusion

The economic burden of mental illness in HSO significantly impacts both individual organizations and the economy as a whole. Mental illnesses such as emotional burnout, depression, and anxiety disorders lead to direct costs in the form of excessive healthcare bills, workers' compensation claims, and early employee loss. Indirect costs in the form of lost productivity, workplace errors and injuries, and staff turnover mean additional monetary losses, lower quality of work, and corporate morale loss.

As a result of these problems, the development and implementation of effective stress prevention mechanisms and mental health support have become essential steps in improving productivity and reducing economic losses. Mental health support services, resilience training, improved working conditions, and flexible working hours are not only effective ways of reducing stress but also effective mechanisms for enhancing staff satisfaction and decreasing turnover. Businesses that actively promote their employees' mental well-being end up with a more productive and loyal staff, which leads to their long-term success and stability.

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