

Strategies for Managing Occupational Stress in a Small Food Company in Baixada Fluminense – Rio de Janeiro

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Abstract: The industrialization process in Brazil, starting in 1930, brought rapid changes in the world of work, such as increased competition between organizations, the need for constant productivity and increasingly greater quality demands from consumers. Such changes have altered the work dynamics in organizations, making companies increasingly concerned about the impact of work on the lives of their employees. Considered the “Evil of the 21st Century”, stress has been an object of concern around the world. Occupational stress, which is related to the work environment, impacts the mental and physical health of workers, in addition to causing harm to the organization and, when not treated, is capable of culminating in Burnout Syndrome. Given the lack of studies related to the topic applied to Brazilian micro and small companies, the general objective of this article is to analyze how organizational strategies can be adopted to manage occupational stress at KGSJ foods. As a methodology, a qualitative approach was used, of an applied nature. The research method used was a case study in a small company in the food sector located in Baixada Fluminense, Rio de Janeiro. The research participants were selected randomly and for accessibility, encompassing employees from the most different operational sectors of the manufacturing unit of the organization studied. The data collection instruments were based on semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation and documentary collection. For data analysis, the Content Analysis technique was used to examine the verbalizations of the interviewees. As a result, it was observed that the main stressors in the organization are due to the type of management adopted by the company, interpersonal relationships in the work environment, in addition to the development of the work itself and the work environment. Impacts were identified on the physical, mental and/or emotional health of workers, as well as positive and negative coping strategies aimed at regulating emotions, highlighting self-control and social support. Finally, suggestions for organizational strategies for mitigating, preventing and combating occupational stress in the organization are presented.

Keywords: occupational stress, coping strategies, small businesses

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid changes that occurred in Brazil after 1930 resulting from the industrialization process culminated in the intensification of the pace of work. Such transformations make companies increasingly concerned about the health of their employees and the implications that work can have on individuals' lives (Silva, 2019; Gomes; Paiva; Barbosa, 2022).

Despite having its positive side of achievement, work also has negative points, such as the stress that is generated during its development. Stress is currently considered the evil of the 21st century by the WHO and has been increasing in modern society, being associated with the root cause of different diseases (Marras; Veloso, 2012; Silva; Lima; Domingues Júnior, 2023). The International Stress Management Association of Brazil (ISMA-BR), through a survey carried out in 2010, found that Brazil is the second country most affected by occupational stress, second only to Japan (Marchetti, 2010). In January 2022, the World Health Organization - WHO recognized burnout as an occupational disease, being a consequence of untreated occupational stress, ensuring the same labor rights for professionals affected by the disease. According to data published by the Ministry of Finance (2017), mental and behavioral disorders are the third biggest cause of absence from work in Brazil, including depressive episodes, anxiety disorders and severe stress. From the data presented, stress impacts organizations, their workers and society in general.

Of all organizations operating in Brazil, 99% are micro and small companies and these are responsible for 52% of the generation of formal jobs in the private sphere, in addition to representing 27% of the Brazilian GDP (SEBRAE, 2018). According to information from the Brazilian Food Industry Association, the food sector is the largest in Brazil, with around 38 thousand companies and generating the majority of jobs in the country (ABIA, 2022). Furthermore, there are significantly fewer organizational strategies and policies aimed at encouraging mental health and stress management in small businesses. When compared to large companies, they encounter barriers such as lack of financial resources, lack of knowledge and lack of management time to support and promote such programs (Dawkins; Martin; Kilpatrick; Scott, 2018).

The organization selected as the object of study, which is here called by the fictitious name of KGSJ Alimentos for the purpose of maintaining confidentiality, is a small company focused on food production and has its headquarters in Baixada Fluminense, in Rio de Janeiro. The choice of the enterprise was based on easy access by the researcher, in addition to the organization's openness to receiving new proposals capable of generating improvements in its processes. The manifestations of stress at work presented by employees to managers and the lack of studies that correlate small Brazilian companies and occupational stress contributed to the choice. Given this situation, the following research question arises: **How can organizational strategies be adopted to manage occupational stress at KGSJ foods?**

To achieve the general objective of analyzing how organizational strategies can be adopted to manage occupational stress at KGSJ foods, the following specific objectives were defined: explain the definitions of stress and occupational stress, its causes and consequences in individuals and organizations; identify, in the perception of the interviewed employees, what are the stress factors they experience in the work dynamics of the company studied and how occupational stress affects them and detect the coping strategies adopted by the interviewees.

The theoretical relevance of the research lies in its contribution to the body of technological scientific knowledge about stress. Furthermore, it contributes to discussions about the management of occupational stress through observation of the reality of a small company. The practical relevance is due to the opportunity to provide elements that contribute to the improvement of policies and strategies for managing occupational stress in the company studied, which will directly benefit the managers and employees of KGSJ Alimentos.

2. WHAT IS STRESS?

The word "stress" comes from Latin, and, during the 17th century, its meaning was referred to adversity or affliction. In the 18th century, the term began to mean force, effort or pressure (Pereira, Lanna E Coelho, 2014). Only in the 20th century did the term begin to be used to refer to an idea of pathology in living organisms (Vilhena; Machado; Silva Filho; Carneiro; Muniz, 2021).

Marras and Veloso (2012, p.11) define stress as "an individual's biological and psychological reactions (...) to deal with a stressor or threat understood as such". Stress is a biochemical mechanism for the survival of living beings that has existed since ancient times (Prado, 2016). Thus, it is a group of reactions developed by an organism when it is exposed to situations that require some type of effort to adapt, making this organism in a state of stress capable of reflecting necessary returns to preserve its integrity (Silva, 2010).

Stress can have internal and external sources. The internal ones are all those related to the individuality of the subject. External sources are related to everyday life, stressful everyday situations, problems with family and friends, excessive work, among others (Cavalcanti; Bagarollo; Lipp; Constantini, 2021).

There are different delimitations of the idea of stress that are reflected in the physiological and psychological systems of the human being, such as: eustress and distress, stress due to overload and stress due to monotony, acute stress, chronic stress, post-traumatic stress and occupational stress. Each one manifests itself in a different way and in a certain context (Araldi-Favassa; Armiliato; Kalinine, 2005; Marras; Veloso, 2012).

Although stress is considered a positive factor in certain situations, when, for example, it drives the individual to seek better results, such tension, when it becomes excessive stress, generates negative consequences (Fidelis; Zille; Rezende, 2020).

Distress, for example, It is the negative and harmful aspect of stress, which makes the individual ill, weakening and unbalancing them, generating weakness and vulnerability. Eustress is the positive side of stress which, in moderate doses, increases motivation and engagement. It is the feeling that comes from situations of achievement and triumph (Abacar; Aliante; Alfredi Nahia, 2020).

Stress does not distinguish between sex, age, or race and has been seen as the main aspect of problems related to health and personal problems, directly impacting the individual's quality of life and causing its deterioration (Santana, 2010). Therefore, it needs to be treated, whether through therapies, psychological treatments or alternative treatments (Cavalcanti; Bagarollo; Lipp; Constantini, 2021).

3. OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

The first studies on stress in the workplace appeared around 1970 and, nowadays, the topic has been increasingly recognized as a serious problem, which is growing and affects the whole world.

Sadir, Bignotto and Lipp (2010, p. 74) define occupational stress as an “emotional state that manifests itself from a discrepancy between what is required of the worker and the resources he or she has to manage such a level of demand”. Occupational stress is that which results from the relationship between the individual and their work (Moraes; Pereira, 2021), being "a set of psychological disorders or psychological suffering associated with work experiences" (Prado, 2016; p. 286). Thus, presents itself as an emotional imbalance caused by the excess of demands that work offers and the lack of resources that an individual has to face this excess (Moraes; Pereira, 2021; Prado, 2016) . 2023) occupational stress is a physical and emotional response of the worker when he is faced with work demands that are outside his capabilities, regardless of the definition adopted, it is noticeable that occupational stress manifests itself when the worker is unable to cope. what is required of you in the work environment.

Occupational stress can be derived from different sources, such as: work itself and the work environment, interpersonal relationships in the environment, management model adopted by the company, individuality of each worker and factors external to the organizational environment (Almeida, Lopes, Costa, Santos, 2018; Lima, Rodrigues, Sanches, Souza, 2020; Fidelis, Zille, Rezende, 2020; Furthermore, it affects individuals and organizations. The condition of occupational stress can generate impacts on both the individual and the organization. In the individual, it generates physical and mental problems, such as: tiredness, anxiety, emotional instability, lack of motivation, lack of interest, dissatisfaction, frustration, exhaustion, muscle pain, among others. In the organization, it leads to a series of consequences, such as: turnover, absenteeism, rework, sabotage of organizational processes, delays, low productivity and performance, work accidents and absences (Sadir, Bignotto, Lipp, 2010; Silva, 2010; Arcaui, França, 2014; , Andoolhe, 2021; Schultz, Colet, Rieth, Tavares, Stumm, Treviso, 2022;

When talking about occupational stress today, it is not possible to forget Burnout Syndrome. Burnout Syndrome or just Burnout, as it is known, is a psychological syndrome of professional exhaustion that occurs because of chronic stressors in the work environment. Thus, it is an individual's response to prolonged exposure to stress in the work environment, especially in activities that require continuous interaction with other people (Maslach, 2001).

Managers must also know employees' stressors, adopt educational and therapeutic methods and understand workers' perceptions of the organization's positive and negative points, in addition to understanding the conflicts that affect the number of people hired. Thus, they will be able to map, monitor, mitigate and prevent stressors in the workplace that influence employees' lives and organizational performance (Matos, 2019; Nakamura, Aoyagi, Dorneles, Barbosa, 2020; Silva, Lima, Domingues Junior; 2023).

4. SMALL BUSINESSES AND OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

Representing 99% of organizations operating in Brazil, micro and small companies are important figures in national economic development as they drive the economy, generating income and jobs. Furthermore, they work to support the recovery of economic growth, being able to reduce social inequality and contributing to the development of the region where they are located (Pinheiro, Neto, 2019).

Despite the importance of Micro and Small businesses, programs to promote mental health and policies for stress management in these organizations are rare. Programs aimed at mental health care and occupational stress management are, for the most part, implemented in large companies. In small companies, the introduction of policies on the topic is more difficult and becomes scarce as it requires the mobilization of financial resources and knowledge, in addition to encountering barriers such as lack of interest, lack of management support and limited time. Time, for example, in small and medium-sized companies, is commonly focused on executing the core business activity (Dawkins, Martin, Kilpatrick, Scott, 2018; Martin, Kilpatrick, Scott, Cocker, Dawkins; Brough, Sanderson, 2020).

In the study carried out by Sanches, Marietto, Silva, Paixão, Meirelles (2008) with 900 employees, 84% at operational level, belonging to 30 different small and medium-sized companies, it was noticed that the main sources of stress in these organizations are: volume of high workload and long working hours, interpersonal relationships between professional colleagues, lack of management and appreciation, lack of adequate equipment and tools, in addition to inadequate physical space for carrying out activities and communication problems.

Dawkins, Martin, Kilpatrick and Scott (2018) reinforce that, especially in small companies, there are stressors such as the accumulation of multiple roles, long and tiring working hours and employees' difficulty in reconciling their personal and professional lives.

Occupational stress in small businesses also affects managers. Martin, Kilpatrick, Scott, Cocker, Dawkins, Brough and Sanderson (2020), in a survey carried out with 297 managers of small and medium-sized companies, indicate that the directors and owners of these institutions have a high risk of being impacted by occupational stress due to excessive workload, work, lack of growth opportunities, poor communication and interpersonal problems. Therefore, this context can affect, in addition to organizational performance, the organizational climate and employees.

Occupational stress impacts micro, small, medium or large companies, as well as workers at all levels of the organizational structure. Considering the representation of micro and small companies, mainly in Brazil, it is important that they adopt strategies that increasingly improve their administration and the working conditions they offer, as well as tools that help in solving problems, facilitating their growth, development and survival (Rodrigues, Jesus, Oliveira, 2019).

5. COPING STRATEGIES

The stress scenarios faced by human beings lead them to develop coping strategies or coping strategies, as they are known. Such strategies serve to manage internal or external stressful scenarios since human beings are not apathetic beings in the face of the demands that surround them (Maturana, Valle, 2014; Muller, Silva, Pesca, 2021)

The most accepted and used definition of coping is based on the cognitivist view of Lazarus and Folkman from 1984, by which coping is understood as the strategies adopted to react and deal with stress, adapting to different situations. In this view, coping strategies consider the resources available at the time, as well as the particularities, demands of the situation and personal factors of the individual, thus being a psychological process (Pinheiro, Tróccoli, Tamayo, 2003; Maturana, Valle, 2014; Barros, Souza, 2018). The way everyone responds to threatening situations is called coping and is related to the effort made to prevent or reduce the suffering associated with a stressful situation, adapting to the stressful scenario (Nascimento, Garcia, Cornacchione, 2021).

Lazarus and Folkman, in their 1984 work, understand that there are two categories when it comes to coping. The first is focused on solving the problem. Thus, the aim is to change the scenario, seeking alternative solutions to act on the situation, trying to remove or pacify the stressful source. Individuals usually use coping to solve a problem when they realize that the situation can be resolved. Furthermore, this strategy is generally the most effective in maintaining mental health (Antoniazzi, Dell'Aglio, Bandeira, 1998; De Almeida, 2012). The second category of coping advocated focuses on emotions. Thus, individuals act to regulate their emotional state with the aim of changing their level of feelings, minimizing the anguish generated by the stressor. In cases where the individual believes that the scenario cannot be changed, emotion-based coping is most used. This type of coping is less effective in maintaining mental health (Antoniazzi, Dell'Aglio, Bandeira, 1998; De Almeida, 2012).

Coping can be positive, promoting health and well-being, or it can be negative, bringing harmful consequences in the long term (Muller, Silva, Pesca, 2021). The coping style adopted by each person has an impact on their development in the family and social sphere, as well as professional and personal. Within organizations, maturing ways of coping with stress is important for workers' quality of life, improving their physical and mental health, and consecutively retaining qualified and committed professionals (Nascimento, Garcia, Cornacchione, 2021).

6. METHODOLOGY

The investigation was characterized as qualitative research in terms of its approach as it considered the dynamic relationship between the real world and the subject (Creswell, 2014). As for its nature, it was constituted as applied research (Marcondes, Miguel, Franklin, Perez, 2017) and as for its objectives, it was exploratory (Gil, 2008).

We chose to carry out a case study since this category allowed us to understand a delimited real-life system, delving deeper into it through data collection based on different sources of information (Creswell, 2014).

To develop the research, the following data collection procedures were used: non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews with a script prepared by the author for data collection; gathering information about the organization through the website, documents and directly with the founding director. In addition, bibliographical research was also used involving scientific knowledge formulated about small businesses, occupational stress and coping strategies.

Twenty-five employees of the enterprise were interviewed. The research subjects were chosen for accessibility and intentionally, encompassing at least two employees from each of the operational areas of the organization studied.

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis of the primary data collected was carried out through Content Analysis (Bardin, 2011) and encompassed three fundamental phases: pre-analysis - exploration of the material and treatment of results - inference and interpretation. Data analysis was carried out based on four pre-defined categories and the themes that were most repeated during employees' verbalizations were in each of them.

The first category analyzed referred to perceptions of the rhythm and dynamics of work in the organization's day-to-day activities.

Table1. Category: *Perceptions about work rhythm and dynamics*

Category: Perception of rhythm and work dynamics	
Definition: Everyday life is busy, massive and with many activities to be done. At the end of the year, the work dynamics are heavy. Overtime is worked, Sundays are worked and shifts last up to 12 hours a day to achieve the goal. In the months of November and December it's crazy. Overwork, overload and accumulation of tasks make the routine even more demanding and tiring.	
Themes	Examples of Verbalizations
Running, demanding, exhausting and massive routine	<p>E12: The routine here is very massive, there is a lot to do.</p> <p>E5: [The routine] is very hectic. Every day of the week I'm in a different sector doing something (...) so I don't stop for a minute.</p> <p>E4: At the end of the year, then, it was heavy! We were doing 12 hours [of work]. It was a rush to reach the goal, but we did it!</p> <p>E6: It's quite a race. Now the end of the year was also very busy, we worked until Sunday. [Day to day] is busy.</p> <p>E25: my work routine from November to December was crazy, especially December, because we were in high demand</p> <p>E18: As we work with a goal, sometimes there is a bit of excess work for the small number of employees we have.</p> <p>E19: There are days when I find it hard, there are days when I find it very tiring. There are times when you must do yours and someone else's (...) gets overwhelmed.</p>

Source: Prepared by the author based on verbalizations from interviews (2024)

Due to the seasonality of the sector, the months of November and December, months of the so-called “End of Year Parties” such as Christmas and New Year, were considered the busiest, requiring a lot of overtime and weekend work. Thus, employees demonstrated feeling tired, overworked, understanding the work routine as “crazy”.

Stress, according to Silva (2010), develops when an organism is exposed to situations that require some type of effort to adapt. In the case of the work routine of KGSJ Alimentos employees, this can also be considered a source of stress due to the way it develops, especially during periods of high demand. The dynamics and pace of work mentioned can also develop stress in employees due to overload (Araldi-Favassa; Armiliato; Kalinine, 2005; Marras; Veloso, 2012) since it has the capacity to be a greater stressful situation than individuals can handle. to support. The employees' perceptions about their work rhythm corroborated what was exposed by Sanches, Marietto, Silva, Paixão, Meirelles (2008). These authors, through a study carried out in small and medium-sized companies, demonstrated that high workload and long working hours are some of the main stress factors in organizations of this size.

The second category analyzed referred to “Employees’ perceptions of stressors in the work environment”.

Table2. *Category: Employees’ perceptions of stressors in the workplace work environment (continued)*

Category: Employees' perception of stressors in the work environment	
Definition: What causes stress is unstable leadership, which does not know where it is going or where it is not going, as well as a lack of organization and active role of leaders. The lack of direction for carrying out activities that culminate in demands for tasks that employees were not well instructed on. The charges that employees receive for tasks that they are unable to do and are beyond what can be delivered. The distancing of management from the company's day-to-day operations, in addition to the lack of warnings directed at insubordinates, the high tolerance for these cases and the impunity that occurs in the organizational environment. Another thing that stresses you is people. Communication failures, the relationship between teams and a lot of gossip in the workplace. Overwork is also a stress factor. The high demand for the low number of employees generates excess work and overtime. Furthermore, working while standing is also very stressful. Delays in production due to problems with raw materials or problems with machines are also stressful factors as they cause working hours to be extended a lot.	
Themes	Examples of Verbalizations
Type of management adopted by the organization	<p>E10: I think it's an unstable leadership, which doesn't know where it's going or where it's not going.</p> <p>E21: The lack of organization, things that the leader had to pressure to work and didn't do.</p> <p>E16: Lack of direction, many times from management and supervision, and we end up being charged for things that were not directed very well. So, this stresses me out a little.</p> <p>E25: And I can't deal with the billing. And charges that you have already explained why are not working. It's beyond what I can deliver.</p> <p>E15: 'Management' stresses me out. [The director] had to be closer, that bothers me.</p> <p>E3: In my view, it is the insubordination of some employees (...) there is a very large tolerance that borders on abuse of those who are subordinates. This makes me stressed! This makes me very stressed!</p> <p>E22: Nowadays what stresses me out is impunity. I see a lot of things wrong and people who could do something turn a blind eye, pretend not to see. But we know what we see.</p>

Table2. *Category: Employee perceptions of stressors in the work environment (conclusion)*

Category: Employees' perception of stressors in the work environment	
Themes	Examples of Verbalizations
Interpersonal relationships in the workplace	<p>E1: Communication, relationships.</p> <p>E12: Communication problems, we communicate with someone, and the person misunderstands, passes on the wrong information and you end up being frowned upon. This ends up affecting a lot.</p> <p>E6: When it happens, it's stress and it's something that I think almost every firm has, it's gossip.</p> <p>E19: Lots of gossip, he told me.</p> <p>E7: Gossip! Joke. Lots of “birds” over there, birds over here. We have to help here and when we need help, there is no one. It makes me incredibly nervous.</p> <p>E13: Here there are sectors that ask for help and when it's our turn, no one can help.</p>
Themes	Examples of Verbalizations
Sources linked to the work itself and the work environment	<p>E20: Another thing that causes stress is too much work, too much demand for few people. This also causes a lot of stress because I'm just one, I can't do two things at the same time.</p> <p>E18: What stresses me out is overwork, sometimes you end up doing more work, going overtime, the backlog, you know? It ends up stressing you</p> <p>E19: Working on your feet until late is very stressful.</p> <p>E14: Too much work, we work standing up.</p> <p>E11: From my point of view, what stresses me out is: breaking the machine, staying late.</p> <p>E6: We will put machine maintenance in second place. Sometimes production is delayed because of machines.</p>

Source: Prepared by the author based on verbalizations from interviews (2024)

There are different sources of stress linked to the work environment. The category “Employees’ perception of stress factors in the work environment” demonstrated that in the company studied, the main sources of occupational stress derived from the type of management adopted by KGSJ Alimentos, in addition to the interpersonal relationships established in the work environment and sources linked to the environment occupational and the work itself. The perceived sources of stress corroborated what was explained by Almeida, Lopes, Costa, Santos (2018); Lima, Rodrigues, Sanches, Souza (2020); Fidelis, Zille, Rezende (2020) and Zabin; Zaitoun; Sweetness (2023). These authors stated that pressures in the work environment, the support given by management, the organizational climate, activity planning and the corporate communication model are stressors that derive from the type of management adopted by the company. This was a subcategory mentioned in 13 interviews and was classified as a source of stress.

Almeida, Lopes, Costa, Santos (2018); Lima, Rodrigues, Sanches, Souza (2020); Fidelis, Zille, Rezende (2020) and Zabin; Zaitoun; Sweity (2023) also stated that resentment and rivalry with the team, conflicts, gossip and communication noise, as well as excessive work, the level of demands and the type of work carried out can develop occupational stress.

The third category analyzed referred to “Perceptions about the impact of occupational stress on health”.

Table3. Category: Perceptions about the impact of occupational stress on health

Category: Perceptions about the impact of occupational stress on health
<p>Definition: In emotional and mental health, the desire to cry manifests itself. Lock yourself in the bathroom to cry. In some cases, the onset of depression was noted due to stress at work, which culminated in panic at the thought of going to work, as well as discouragement and a feeling of psychological pressure. In other cases, burnout has occurred. The impacts on physical health manifest themselves through headaches, high blood pressure, racing heart, twitching eyes and eyebrows, shortness of breath and stomach pain.</p>

Themes	Examples of Verbalizations
Impacts on mental and emotional health	<p>E9: I want to cry. E1: I left crying, I cried all the time. My emotions were shaken (...). E13: I already locked myself in the bathroom and started crying, I cried like a child. E10: I had an emotional problem, because it is so stressful. E14: Not diagnosed, but I already felt like I was going into depression here. Sunday arrived and I panicked because I had to work tomorrow. E2: I woke up without wanting to come to work, discouraged, discouraged, depressed. E25: Already. I had Burnout. I was no longer well; I was very stressed, and they started judging what I did wrong and that made me feel good... I was beside myself.</p>
Impacts on physical health	<p>E5: Headache! E18: I've had a drop in blood pressure, a headache. E21: Racing heart, high blood pressure. E13: There was a time when I kept shaking out of nowhere and thought I was having a problem. E12: My eye sometimes twitches, but I didn't know it was stress. E14: The heart was racing, shortness of breath, tremors, eye twitching. E20: I went to sleep with my heart beating very hard and woke up with my heart racing. E22: I already had high blood pressure, a headache that wouldn't go away. Pain in the stomach, I felt it a lot. Lots of pain in the stomach.</p>

Source: Prepared by the author based on verbalizations from interviews (2024)

The majority of KGSJ Alimentos employees who stated that they had already suffered negative impacts from occupational stress manifested physical symptoms such as altered blood pressure, headaches and tremors in the eyes and/or body. The most common emotional and/or mental symptoms were episodes of crying, depression and/or discouragement and feelings of despair. According to several authors such as Sadir, Bignotto and Lipp (2010), Arcaui and França (2014), Ferreira, Azevedo and Rocha (2019) and Gomes, Paiva, Barbosa (2022), all these symptoms can be triggered by stress experienced in the work environment.

In this category, it is also possible to highlight that all interviewees cited stress from a negative and harmful perspective, which makes the individual ill and unbalances the individual called distress (Abacar; Aliante; Alfredo Nahia, 2020).

The fourth category analyzed referred to “Coping Strategies”.

Table 4. Category: Coping Strategies

Category: Coping Strategies adopted by employees	
Definition: Listening to music, playing video games, watching TV, series and films, as well as traveling, going out and spending time with family and/or friends are activities that de-stress. Music, church, praise, eating sweets or ice cream, eating a lot and drinking alcohol too. Furthermore, taking a shower, lying in bed, being at home and practicing physical activity helps to de-stress a lot. In some cases, leaving the stressful environment or ignoring the situation also becomes effective.	
Themes	Examples of Verbalizations
Focus on regulating emotions	<p>E4: It seems that just by leaving, the weight stays here. When I go out, I leave everything here. I don't take stress from work home. E5: I listen to music, I play. I like to play video games. I watch series, film. I get distracted somehow with friends. E16: I play video games, I like to travel, on the weekends go out to eat, see a movie, these are the things that de-stress me: traveling, going out and spending time with my family. E7: When I leave here, I go to the bar to have a cold beer to de-stress. E14: What really relieves me of stress is church, praise. Tidying the house, taking care of the plants, I have a lot of plants. Taking care of the plants relieves me. E12: When I'm stressed, I drink a 700ml glass of açai and it de-stresses me a little. E19: Eat! Eat a lot. I eat a lot when I'm stressed. E23: I'm passionate about running, I've been running for 1 year, I've been running for 1 year. E24: Gym! Academy! It helps to de-stress a lot.</p>

Source: Prepared by the author based on verbalizations from interviews (2024)

Coping Strategies category demonstrated that all interviewees tend to use emotion-focused coping as a way of coping. Thus, instead of aiming to resolve the problem by seeking to remove or pacify the source of stress, workers chose to regulate their emotions by changing their feelings, according to the verbalizations (Lazarus; Folkman; 1984).

It is important to highlight that coping based on emotions is widely used when the individual realizes that the stressful situation cannot be changed and is the least effective coping in maintaining mental health (Antoniuzzi, Del'aglio, Bandeira, 1998; De Almeida, 2012). Most coping strategies are positive. However, it is possible to notice that negative coping strategies were also used, even if in smaller numbers. Such strategies, according to Muller, Silva and Pesca (2021), can be harmful in the long term, generating negative consequences for individuals.

The type of coping adopted by each subject affects, in addition to their personal, social and family life, their professional life. Therefore, maturing coping methods is important for maintaining workers' health and quality of life, impacting their performance within the organization and, consequently, the company's competitive advantage (Nascimento, Garcia, Cornacchione, 2021).

8. CONCLUSION

To achieve the general objective of this research of analyzing how organizational strategies can be adopted to manage occupational stress at KGSJ foods, it was necessary to achieve the specific objectives previously defined. From the first specific objective, we obtained an overview of the definitions of stress and occupational stress, their causes and consequences based on national and international research, considering seminal authors in the area.

As evidence of the achievement of the second intermediate objective, it was identified that the main stressors in the organizational environment of KGSJ Alimentos are related to the management model adopted by the company, interpersonal relationships and factors linked to the execution of work and the work itself. It was also possible to identify, in addition to the sources of stress, the main impacts of occupational stress on employees' health. On a physical level, the main symptoms detected were altered blood pressure, headaches, body tremors and accelerated heartbeats. In the mental and/or emotional context, most employees stated that they had already suffered from episodes of crying inside and outside the work environment, as well as depression and discouragement. Still in this scenario, it was observed that one of the participants reached Burnout due to the stress experienced at work.

Regarding the type of coping adopted by KGSJ Alimentos employees, it was found that all interviewees adopted coping focused on emotions. Thus, they look for ways to regulate their feelings, changing their emotional states. Regarding the coping strategies used, most workers adopt positive coping and employ social support as coping strategies, which is characterized by seeking support from people and the surrounding environment, practicing physical activities, games, music, watching TV, among others.

Based on the research, it is possible to suggest the adoption of strategies such as: implementation of a systematic performance assessment; adoption of software for production planning and control; implementation of climate research and mandatory training schedule; creation of a code of ethics and conduct, creation of a channel for suggestions and complaints, quarterly presentation of results; adoption of two work shifts; implementation of rest breaks and "Day Off".

The strategies suggested from this research focused on improving interpersonal relationships and communication between teams, as well as the relationship between leader and subordinate, in addition to improving planning, management practices and supervision of team activities. Such strategies aim to guarantee better working conditions, valuing the coping strategies adopted by workers and creating greater competitive advantage for the company, supporting its growth and survival.

It is recommended that more in-depth research be carried out on occupational stress within small companies by other researchers in the field of Administration. As a suggestion for future research, it is advisable to carry out research aimed at measuring stress levels in a quantitative manner within KGSJ Alimentos.

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