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**PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS AND DYSFUNCTIONS IN THE
ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENT: FINDINGS,
SOLUTIONS, AND INTERVENTIONS**

SPECIALTY 511.01 – GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY

Summary of the PhD Thesis in Psychology

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The doctoral thesis and the summary can be consulted at the National Library of the Republic of Moldova, at the Central Library of Moldova State University, and on the website of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (www.anacec.md).

The summary of the PhD thesis was sent on **September 9, 2025**.

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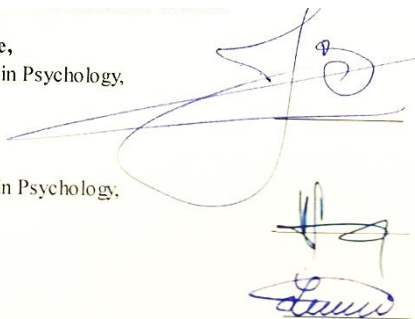
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The image shows three handwritten signatures in blue ink. The top signature is large and stylized, corresponding to Șleahțițchi Mihai. The middle signature is smaller and more compact, corresponding to Cojocaru Natalia. The bottom signature is also compact and corresponds to Zubco Luminița.

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CONCEPTUAL BENCHMARKS OF THE RESEARCH

Relevance and importance of the addressed topic

International practices show that occupational risks include, besides physical, chemical, and biological ones, psychosocial risks as well. In recent decades, organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) have acknowledged the negative impact of these risks on both physical and mental health, as well as on the functioning of organizations. In this regard, they conduct awareness-raising campaigns and initiate ongoing research, highlighting the link between psychosocial risks and the emergence of organizational dysfunctions¹.

Organizational dysfunctions are closely interdependent with psychosocial risks, as they affect both employees' mental health and emotional balance, and the efficient functioning of the organization. Understanding the mechanisms underlying these dysfunctions provides the opportunity to develop tailored interventions aimed at supporting psychosocial well-being in the workplace. Considering that prevention is more effective than intervention on dysfunctions, both at the individual and organizational level, the application of a clear methodology for managing psychosocial risks becomes imperative.

Thus, the need for developing a theoretical and methodological framework for investigating, assessing, and intervening in the field of psychosocial risks at work is increasingly evident. By integrating coherent and relevant classifications of these risks, as well as developing specific tools—such as observation sheets, interview guides, and standardized questionnaires—the study supports the effort of a continuous, coordinated, contextualized, and integrated analysis of risk factors. An essential element of theoretical value is the proposal of evaluation and intervention matrices that allow for the analysis of risks according to frequency, severity, costs, and levels of organizational responsibility, thereby contributing to the prevention and management of organizational dysfunctions. In this context, the managerial team, together with the organizational psychologist, plays an essential role in identifying and mitigating psychosocial risks and organizational dysfunctions.

In today's context of accelerated transformations in the labor market, marked by digitalization and the expansion of telework, the issue of psychosocial risks is becoming increasingly relevant. Exploring these new dimensions is essential for the formulation of organizational policies and practices that ensure a sustainable, balanced, and healthy work environment in the digital era.

Positioning of the topic within international and national concerns, in an inter- and transdisciplinary context

The study conducted in this paper fits within *international concerns*, mentioning in this

¹ *Activitatea de cercetare privind riscurile psihosociale și sănătatea mintală (2022-2025)*. Asociația Europeană pentru Sănătate și Securitate în Muncă. <https://osha.europa.eu/ro/themes/psychosocial-risks-and-mental-health/research>.

context the campaigns launched by EU-OSHA². At the same time, we emphasize that the study is also aligned with ***national research directions*** – Priority IV. Societal Challenges³: a) economic competitiveness; b) valorization of human and social capital; and d) education for sustainable development. More specifically, through this work we propose a comprehensive study on the manifestation of psychosocial risks in local organizations and recommendations for the evaluation and management of these risks in order to increase efficiency and well-being in the workplace.

Given the complexity of the phenomenon, the study of psychosocial risks requires an ***interdisciplinary approach***, including psychology, occupational medicine, sociology, and management. While psychological sciences explore how occupational stress and power relations at work influence employees' well-being, sociology analyzes the social and economic context that contributes to the emergence of these risks, and occupational medicine focuses on preventing work-related illnesses, whereas human resource management develops strategies for assessing and reducing risks. At the same time, the research conducted is framed within ***general psychology***, as a field that studies psychological processes and phenomena at the individual level (emotions, perceptions, and individual attitudes, connected to and derived from the work process) and, by extension, within the field of ***social-organizational psychology***, since it analyzes phenomena that occur in the organizational environment and have implications for organizational efficiency and employees' well-being at work.

Placing the research topic in an intra- and interdisciplinary context allows us to highlight the involvement of multiple actors, such as policymakers, trade unions, employers, and employees, in order to develop viable long-term solutions. Psychosocial risks are not only an organizational or academic issue, but also a public health, social, economic, and legal concern that requires collaboration across different sectors. An interdisciplinary approach makes it possible to develop policies and practices that improve working conditions at both national and international levels.

Researchers in the field, such as T.S. Kristense, H. Hannerz, A. Hogh, and V. Borge, argue that an individualized approach to psychosocial risks is necessary for each country. Accordingly, the assessment of these risks must be carried out in line with national practices, as part of the overall occupational risk assessment. In the Republic of Moldova, the Law on Occupational Safety and Health mentions occupational risks, but it mainly refers to physical risk factors, addressing only tangentially some of the psychosocial risks highlighted by the ILO and the specialized literature. Through this study, we aim to bring the Republic of Moldova closer to European and international standards on occupational health and safety, by presenting a theoretical framework that can serve as a scientific basis for the development of tools adapted to national requirements.

Accordingly, based on the arguments presented in this context, the ***research problem*** proposed for this study raises the following question: how can international models of analysis and management of psychosocial risks be adapted so as to adequately respond to local organizational realities without compromising scientific rigor and practical applicability? In this regard, it highlights the necessity of establishing a theoretical and empirical framework to support the development of an analysis strategy and of tools for investigating, evaluating, and intervening in psychosocial risks, with the aim of preventing and reducing organizational dysfunctions.

² *Campanii pentru locuri de muncă sigure și sănătoase*. Agenția Europeană pentru Securitate și Sănătate în Muncă (EU-OSHA). <https://osha.europa.eu/ro/campaigns-and-awards/healthy-workplaces-campaigns>.

³ Hotărârea Guvernului Republicii Moldova pentru aprobarea Programului național în domeniile cercetării și inovării pentru anii 2024-2027 nr. 1049 din 21.12.2023.

The purpose of the research is to determine the theoretical, methodological, and empirical foundations for the investigation, analysis, evaluation, and management of psychosocial risks in the organizational environment, by adapting international models to the local specific context, with the aim of developing effective interventions on psychosocial risks in order to prevent and reduce organizational dysfunctions.

Research objectives

O1. To analyze theories, explanatory models, and recent trends in the investigation of psychosocial risks, in order to clarify theoretical and methodological aspects regarding the analysis, evaluation, and management of psychosocial risks in the workplace.

O2. To examine normative acts and mechanisms for managing psychosocial risks and dysfunctions in local organizations, in order to clarify the degree of alignment with international standards in the field of occupational safety and health.

O3. To establish a strategy for the analysis, evaluation, and management of psychosocial risks and dysfunctions in local organizations (based on tools recommended by international guidelines and platforms, as well as tools developed by the author).

O4. To collect and interpret data regarding the analysis, evaluation, and management of psychosocial risks and dysfunctions in local organizations.

O5. To design and implement a psychosocial intervention program aimed at preventing and reducing the negative effects of psychosocial risks and dysfunctions in local organizations.

Research hypothesis

The presence of psychosocial risks in local organizations determines the occurrence of organizational dysfunctions, while the application of integrated strategies for analysis, evaluation, and management of risks, developed on the basis of international standards and adapted to the local context, leads to a reduction of the impact of these risks and to the optimization of organizational functioning.

Summary of the research methodology and justification of the chosen methods

The research methods include the synthesis and analysis of recent theoretical and empirical studies on the phenomenon of psychosocial risks in the organizational environment, with the purpose of delimiting essential aspects for defining and addressing the phenomenon. In order to analyze international and national practices regarding the evaluation and management of psychosocial risks in the workplace, the method of social document analysis was used (the documents analyzed consisted of laws, reports, guidelines, etc., elaborated by relevant associations – ILO, EU-OSHA, etc., including the legislation of the Republic of Moldova). In addition, empirical methods such as interview-based surveys and questionnaires, observation, and case study were used to collect relevant data and validate the proposed tools and methodologies. For data processing, statistical-mathematical methods and qualitative methods of content analysis were applied.

Novelty and originality of the research lie in the integrated approach to psychosocial risks, adapted to the national context – a subject unexplored in the Republic of Moldova. While at the international level psychosocial risks are well documented and managed through guidelines developed by organizations such as EU-OSHA and ILO, national legislation and practices focus predominantly on physical risks, ignoring the complexity and severity of psychosocial ones. Thus, this study creates a bridge between international research and local practice, offering an integrated model for local organizations. The research contributes both academically and practically, with the potential to influence public and organizational policies.

Approval of the scientific results

The research results were approved within the Department of Psychology of the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of Moldova State University, were presented and

discussed at six scientific conferences at national and international levels, and were published in specialized journals and conference proceedings (a total of 10 publications).

Implementation of the scientific results

The research identified the most frequent psychosocial risks in local organizations and their perception. Furthermore, strategies for the analysis, evaluation, and management of psychosocial risks were examined, and instruments, organizational policies, and programs in this regard were proposed. The results were implemented in the adaptation of organizational practices, thus contributing to the efficiency of psychosocial risk management and the creation of healthier and more efficient working environments (in several organizations that served as the basis for the case studies). Publications and participation in conferences facilitated the dissemination of these good practices both nationally and internationally.

Summary of the thesis chapters

The thesis is structured into the following sections: abstracts in Romanian, Russian, and English; introduction; three chapters; general conclusions and practical recommendations; bibliography, including 148 titles; 17 tables; 8 figures; 12 appendices; 147 pages of main text; the declaration of responsibility; and the author's CV.

Publications on the thesis topic

The main content of the research and its results are presented in 10 published scientific works: articles in journals and proceedings of national and international scientific conferences.

Keywords: psychosocial risks, dysfunctions, risk matrix, organizational policies.

CONTENTS OF THE THESIS

The introduction presents the relevance and importance of the chosen topic, its integration into international and national concerns in an inter- and transdisciplinary context, with a review of previous research on the subject, the aim and objectives of the research, the research hypotheses, a synthesis of the research methodology and justification of the chosen methods, and a summary of the thesis chapters.

Chapter 1 – Psychosocial risks and dysfunctions in the organizational environment: theoretical conceptualizations

This chapter analyzes the defining aspects and explanatory theories of psychosocial risks, highlighting their specificity compared to physical risks. Various classifications of psychosocial risk factors are examined, as developed by researchers and international organizations specialized in occupational health and safety, as well as by states with advanced policies in this area. The analysis includes the identification of the main factors generating psychosocial risks and, ultimately, synthesizes a unified list of factors, classifying them according to severity and level of management.

Furthermore, this chapter examines the impact of the identified psychosocial risk factors in relation to organizational dysfunctions, with emphasis on manifestations of deviant organizational behaviors and the negative consequences experienced by individuals exposed to psychosocial risks. Developments in the concept of psychosocial risk in the workplace are also analyzed from the perspective of recent approaches and current trends in international research.

1.1 Psychosocial risks in the organizational environment: defining aspects, approaches, and explanatory theories

This section analyzes the defining aspects of psychosocial risks, starting from the classical definition of risk (Simionescu, 2019) and from classifications developed by researchers and international organizations competent in the field of occupational health and safety (Erwand, 2021; EU-OSHA, 2020; Burr et al., 2019; ILO; European Commission, 2018; Iordache, Petreanu

& Seracin, 2013). Recent perspectives on psychosocial risks in the organizational environment emphasize the necessity of an **integrated approach** that considers both physical and psychosocial risk factors. Thus, the promotion of a healthy organizational culture becomes essential for the prevention and management of these risks. It is important for organizations to implement policies and intervention strategies that address both the physical and psychosocial dimensions of work, ensuring a work environment that supports employee well-being and performance. In this respect, a **contextual approach** becomes indispensable, as psychosocial risks cannot be analyzed in isolation from the social, economic, and cultural realities in which the organization operates. Therefore, risk management requires a **coordinated approach**, involving adequate governmental policies, organizational support, and resources to ensure employees' well-being and mental health. The management of psychosocial risks is a **continuous process**, in line with the cycle diagram proposed by the European Union.

At the end of this section, summarizing the above, we highlight several **defining aspects** that also constitute the theoretical framework on which this thesis is based, namely: *psychosocial risks result from the complex interaction between professional factors, which include both physical and psychosocial elements generated by organizational management, and individual factors, derived from human psychological functioning; the negative impact of psychosocial risks may persist even when the employee is no longer directly exposed to those factors; and effective management of psychosocial risks requires an integrated, contextual, and coordinated organizational approach, aimed at preventing, reducing, and monitoring their impact on employees and the organization.*

The thesis is grounded in a solid theoretical framework, structured around three key concepts: demand–control, person–environment fit, and effort–reward balance. These concepts are reflected in multiple relevant explanatory theories: the engineering, physiological, and psychological model proposed by Cox & Mackay (1981); the transactional model proposed by Lazarus & Folkman (1984, *apud* Erwandi et al., 2021); the demand–control–support model proposed by Karasek, later supplemented by Johnson & Hall (1988 *apud* Zlate, 2007); the person–environment fit theory proposed by French and collaborators (1982 *apud* Bogathy, 2007); the “vitamin theory” by P. Warr; the conservation of resources theory developed by Hobfoll; the effort–reward imbalance theory by Peter, Geibler & Siegrist; the occupational stress theory proposed by Beehr; the demand–reaction compensation theory by Jonge & Dormann; as well as the demands–abilities–support theory proposed by van Veldhoven *et al.* (1987 *apud* Capotescu, 2006). In addition, the WHO theoretical model, developed by Cooper & Davison, proposes a multidisciplinary approach that integrates psychological, sociological, and physiological dimensions, providing a unified framework for the analysis and prevention of psychosocial risks in organizations.

1.2 Generating factors of psychosocial risks in the organizational environment

The classification of factors with the potential to generate psychosocial risks has been, over the last decades, a constant concern for researchers in occupational health and safety. Specialists such as McNeely, Cox, Griffiths, Jettinghoff & Houtman (*Psychosocial risks...*, OSHwiki, 2021), T. Constantin (2004, 2020), I. Simonescu (2019), along with major international organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), have analyzed and proposed various typologies of these risks. The lists proposed differ according to the theoretical framework and methodology of each research group, a tendency also reflected in the classifications produced by specialized institutions in countries with advanced policies in this field.

Building on these contributions, we developed a unified list of factors that may generate psychosocial risks, designed to support the process of identifying, evaluating, and managing them in the organizational environment. A summary of these classifications is presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Factors causing psychosocial risks in the organizational environment

Riscuri psihosociale	Autori
<i>Harassment, Mobbing, or Bullying</i> These involve repeated and intentional actions aimed at tormenting, intimidating, or frustrating a person. In mobbing, a group of colleagues unites against an employee, exerting collective pressure to marginalize them. In bullying, the harassment is carried out by a single individual who holds a higher status or position of power.	EU-OSHA, 2021; OMS, 2021; Comisia Europeană, 2018; Școala Americană de Psihiatrie, 2013; Riedesser și Fischer, 2003.
<i>Violence from third parties</i> This may include threats, as well as physical and/or psychological violence coming from clients, consumers, or patients who benefit from services or products.	EU-OSHA, 2021; OMS, 2021; Comisia Europeană, 2018; Erwandi, 2021; Școala Americană de Psihiatrie, 2013; Ruppert, 2012.
<i>Exposure to traumatic events</i> Facing suffering and caring for dying people – involves intense emotional demands.	Mental health promotion, 2021, 2013; Ruppert, 2012; Riedesser și Fischer, 2003.
<i>Workload, pace, and nature of work</i> An excessive or insufficient workload, combined with high pressure and tight deadlines, can lead to an imbalance in the employee's work activity.	EU-OSHA, 2021, OMS, 2021, Constantin, 2020, Simonescu, 2019, Comisia Europeană, 2018, Karasek și Theorell, 1990, Beehr, 1978.
<i>Lack of creativity and task repetitiveness</i> Monotonous and cyclical activities, with a pace imposed by the system or technology, can lead to demotivation.	Comisia Europeană, 2018, Simonescu, 2019.
<i>Working time</i> Night shifts, extended working hours, and a lack of flexibility in organizing work schedules affect mental health.	Comisia Europeană, 2018; Mintal health promotion, 2021.
<i>Control and autonomy</i> A lack of influence over workload and decision-making can cause feelings of helplessness and frustration.	Comisia Europeană, 2018; Simonescu, 2019; Bournout intervention, 2021; Mintal health promotion, 2021, Karasek, 1979.
<i>Work environment and insufficient resources</i> An unfavorable environment, insufficient resources, inadequate equipment, poorly arranged workstations, and lack of privacy at the workplace pose risks to both physical and psychological safety.	Comisia Europeană, 2018; EU-OSHA, 2021; Simonescu, 2019; Siegrist, 1996.
<i>Organizational culture</i> The absence of an effective motivational system and support for personal development contributes to a negative work atmosphere.	Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, 2021, Comisia Europeană, 2018.
<i>Communication and interpersonal relationships</i> Lack of social support, poor communication (both formal and informal), and workplace conflicts are risk factors that contribute to occupational stress.	Constantin, 2019, Comisia Europeană, 2018, Simonescu, 2019, Erwandi, 2021, Riedesser și Fischer, 2007, Siegrist, 1996, Cooper și Marshall, 1976.
<i>Role in the organization</i> Role ambiguity or conflicts, as well as lack of clarity regarding one's role or job responsibilities within the organization, are significant factors in generating stress.	Comisia Europeană, 2018; Erwandi <i>et. al.</i> , 2021; EU-OSHA, 2021; Van Wart, 2014; Maslach și Leiter, 1997.
<i>Career development</i> Stagnation, underpromotion or overpromotion, as well as job insecurity, generate anxiety.	Constantin, 2019; Comisia Europeană, 2018; Erwandi <i>et al.</i> , 2021.
<i>Work-family interface</i> A precarious balance between professional and personal life can lead to conflicts and burnout.	Comisia Europeană, 2018; EU-OSHA, 2021; Cojocaru <i>et al.</i> , 2020.

<i>Effort–reward imbalance</i> Insufficient recognition of employees’ efforts can amplify dissatisfaction with work.	Erwandi și alții, 2021; EU-OSHA, 2021; Peter, Geibler și Siegrist, 1998.
<i>Poorly managed changes</i> Inadequate management of organizational changes creates uncertainty and anxiety among employees.	Constantin, 2019; Erwandi <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Bournout intervention, 2021; EU-OSHA, 2021.
<i>Organizational justice</i> The perception of fairness in decision-making and performance evaluation influences employees’ mental well-being.	Constantin, 2019; Erwandi <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Hood, 2000.
<i>Individual differences among employees</i> Cultural background, temperament, age, and other individual traits affect how employees respond to stress.	Simonescu, 2019.
<i>Degree of organizational identification</i> Attachment to the company.	Constantin, 2020; Simonescu, 2019, Guest, 2011.
<i>Job satisfaction</i> Perception of rewards and recognition of one’s work.	Constantin, 2020.

The efficient management of psychosocial risks requires a structured approach, and their classification is essential for the clear assignment of responsibilities and for defining the levels at which intervention is necessary. Psychosocial risks may arise in employees’ interactions with clients, patients, or beneficiaries and are often inevitable; however, they can be managed through organizational policies and interventions focused on the development of individual resilience.

In this context, we propose a classification of psychosocial risks according to their emergent character and their level of manifestation (macro, meso, and micro-social, see **Table 2**), as well as their degree of severity (low, medium, and high, see **Table 3**). This classification served as the basis for the development of the risk matrix (described in Chapter 2). The matrix was used in the evaluation and prioritization of interventions in local organizations (cf. Zubco, 2023).

Table 2. Classification of psychosocial risks according to their level of occurrence

Microsocial-level risks These risks stem from dysfunctional interpersonal relationships among colleagues and can be managed through organizational policies aimed at harmonizing employee relations. To mitigate these risks, it is recommended to promote an inclusive organizational climate through equity, diversity, and transparent communication.	Interpersonal conflicts among colleagues Workplace harassment Lack of social support Perceived injustice and favoritism Ineffective and insufficient communication Unhealthy competition Exclusion or cliques in the workplace Role and responsibility ambiguity Competition for limited resources
Mesosocial-level risks These are generated by dysfunctional managerial processes that can directly affect team cohesion and productivity. Managing these risks involves training managers to develop a collaborative, creative, and democratic organizational climate that enhances performance at the organizational level.	Workplace harassment Authoritarian management Vertical communication lacking respect Lack of participation in the decision-making process Lack of managerial support Organizational culture based on perfectionism and performance pressure Unfair distribution of tasks Inflexible work policies Lack of professional development opportunities Competitive work environment and lack of cooperation
Macrosocial-level risks Macrosocial risks are external to the organization and require systemic-level interventions. These risks cannot be fully controlled by organizations, but psychosocial protection strategies can be formulated.	Restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic Economic crises and financial insecurity Globalization and contracts with international companies Legislative changes and government policies

	Digitalization and automation Social and economic inequalities Public health crises and natural disasters Unstable political environment
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In order to assess the potential impact on mental health and organizational functioning, risks were ranked according to severity, according to models proposed by specialists and international organizations in the field (see **Table 3**).

Table 1.3. Classification of psychosocial risks by severity

High-severity risks Factors directly correlated with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety (WHO, 2021; EU-OSHA, 2021; American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Riedesser & Fischer, 2007)	Harassment, mobbing, or bullying Violence from third parties Exposure to traumatic events Workload and work pace
Medium-severity risks Risks that are associated with affective disorders (Karasek, 1979; Siegrist, 1996; European Commission, 2018; Cojocaru et al., 2020; Constantin, 2020; Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, 2021).	Defective interpersonal relationships at the workplace and lack of social support Lack of control Deficient organizational culture and lack of managerial support Perceptions of injustice and inequity at work Conflict between professional and personal life Poor management of organizational changes Inadequate working conditions and insufficient equipment Role ambiguity and excessive responsibility Effort–reward imbalance Shift work and irregular working hours
Low-severity risks Although their immediate impact is not severe, their accumulation can lead to emotional disengagement, demotivation, and adjustment disorders (Pănișoară & Pănișoară, 2005; Guest, 2011; European Commission, 2018; Simonescu, 2019; Constantin, 2020; Erwand, 2021).	Lack of attachment to the company Low job satisfaction Lack of creativity and task repetitiveness Career uncertainty and lack of professional advancement Susceptibility to stress based on individual variations in temperament and skills

The proposed model provides a framework for analysis and intervention, contributing to the development of internal policies and the optimization of strategies for preventing organizational dysfunctions. The multi-level approach (macro–meso–micro) enables the development of a mechanism for managing psychosocial risks at the organizational level. This model formed the basis of the **risk matrix** proposed in the empirical study, which will be detailed in the next chapter, serving as a practical tool for identifying, prioritizing, and managing psychosocial risks in the workplace (Zubco, 2025).

1.3 Implications of psychosocial risks in generating organizational dysfunctions

Exposure to psychosocial risks in the organizational environment has a significant impact on both employee well-being and their organizational behavior, which can lead to dysfunctions that generate considerable costs, affecting the overall economic performance of organizations and causing substantial financial losses. Implementing prevention and management programs for psychosocial risks can reduce these undesirable behaviors and bring important financial benefits to organizations.

***Organizational dysfunction** can be defined as a complex, systemic phenomenon that reflects negative deviations in the functioning of an organization, affecting cohesion, performance, and its ability to achieve objectives.*

These dysfunctions can be influenced by psychosocial factors within the organization, derived from cultural, environmental, managerial, and other structural aspects (see **Table 4**).

Table 4. Organizational dysfunctions

Dysfunctions manifested at the individual level in the work context	Emotional exhaustion Depersonalization / cynicism Reduced personal accomplishment Psychological withdrawal Cognitive difficulties Deviant behaviors (emotional outbursts, substance abuse) Increased susceptibility to accidents, etc.
Organizational dysfunctions in work dynamics	Staff turnover / early retirement Absenteeism Presenteeism Low productivity / operational inefficiency Internal conflicts / decreased team cohesion Deteriorated interpersonal relationships (poor communication, lack of empathy) Organizational climate rigidity or chaos, etc.

Therefore, psychosocial risks and organizational dysfunctions are distinct yet interconnected concepts that affect the healthy functioning of the work environment. While a psychosocial risk refers to organizational, relational, or individual factors that, in interaction with the professional environment, can harm employees' mental and physical health, organizational dysfunctions represent systemic disruptions that impact efficiency, communication, collaboration, and the organizational climate. Untreated psychosocial risks can fuel dysfunctions, and chronic dysfunctions can, in turn, generate or exacerbate psychosocial risks. In this sense, an integrated approach to both dimensions is essential for preventing negative effects on employees' health and organizational performance (see **Figure 1**).

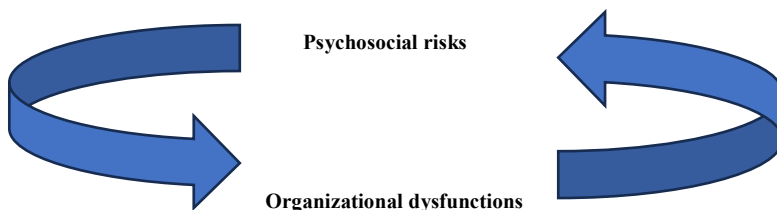


Figure 1. Interdependence between psychosocial risks and organizational dysfunctions

In this research, however, we propose an interventional approach in which, through early identification and proper management of psychosocial risks, this cycle can be interrupted. Thus, although the relationship is circular, it is not entirely closed—there are intervention points that can reverse the direction or even break this dysfunctional loop.

1.4 Research on psychosocial risks in the organizational environment: developments, recent trends, and perspectives

Psychosocial risks at the workplace have become a major research topic over the last decades, with growing recognition of their significant impact both on employees' health and well-being on one hand, and on organizational functionality on the other. The evolution of research in the field of psychosocial risks demonstrates significant progress, from the initial phase of identification and conceptualization to the development of rigorous evaluation tools and specific intervention strategies. Within this context, the following historical stages and major directions of development can be distinguished:

1950–1970: Foundations of the Occupational Stress Concept

The first relevant theoretical contributions emerged with Selye (1956), who introduced the concept of stress as a nonspecific response of the organism to any demand, described through the general adaptation syndrome (apud Zlate, 2007). He outlined three fundamental stages—alarm, resistance, and exhaustion—providing a framework for understanding the physiological and psychological reactions of individuals under external pressures.

1970–1990: Formulation of the “Burnout” Syndrome

This period marked a shift from the general study of stress to a focus on its specific effects in professional contexts. The term “burnout” was initially used by Bradley (1969) and later scientifically grounded by Freudenberger (1974) and Maslach & Jackson (1976). The three-dimensional burnout model (Maslach, Jackson, Leiter, 1997) was formulated, including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment.

1990–2010: Diversification of Stress Factors and Emergence of the Psychosocial Risk Concept

During this period, specialized literature shifted toward a broader understanding of occupational stress causes, integrating multiple psychosocial risk factors. The concept of psychosocial risk factor thus took shape, and international organizations such as EU-OSHA and ILO initiated efforts to develop methodologies for identifying, evaluating, and managing these risks.

2000–2010: Development of Theoretical Explanatory Models

This stage was marked by the crystallization of relevant theories that scientifically underpin the mechanisms of occurrence and manifestation of psychosocial risks.

2001–Present: Emergence and Validation of Evaluation Instruments

Over the past two decades, emphasis has been placed on developing and validating tools for assessing psychosocial risks. The Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ), General Nordic Questionnaire (QPSNordic), and the System ECO Questionnaire (2020) are examples of standardized instruments (Kristensen & Borg, 2001; Asberg et al., 2008; Constantin 2004–2020).

2010–Present: Economic Dimension and Active Prevention

Recent European initiatives (EU-OSHA, 2018) highlight the major economic impact of psychosocial risks, estimating significant losses due to organizational dysfunctions. Consequently, the focus is on developing proactive, sustainable, and participatory prevention strategies. The OiRA platform (Online interactive Risk Assessment), developed by EU-OSHA, supports qualitative assessment of psychosocial factors at the organizational level.

In CHAPTER 2, Management of psychosocial risks in the organizational environment: international practices and local experiences, global and local approaches to managing psychosocial risks are analyzed, emphasizing integrated methodologies, such as the use of standardized questionnaires and qualitative assessments. The chapter also examines legislation and practices concerning occupational health and safety in the Republic of Moldova, highlighting deficiencies in the current legal framework and proposing amendments aimed at aligning with international standards adapted to the cultural context.

2.1 Particularities regarding the management of psychosocial risks in organizations

Effective management of psychosocial risks requires adapting interventions to the organizational context, considering institutional culture, the nature of activities, and the needs of vulnerable categories. Risk analysis must address both physical and psychosocial factors and involve a multidisciplinary team (Simonescu, 2019). Therefore, psychosocial risk management involves a *coordinated, contextual, and integrated approach* and is a *continuous process*.

Risk management includes three types of interventions (European Commission, 2018): primary – acting on the cause; secondary – acting on the risk; tertiary – increasing resilience through stress management methods.

2.2 Methods and techniques for assessing and managing psychosocial risks in organizations

Studies in the field, especially in recent years (cf. Balode, 2016, 2019; Bogathy, 2007; Murtonen, 2007; Capotescu, 2006; Ursu, 2000; European Commission, EU-OSHA, etc.), propose various methods for analyzing the interaction between organizational and individual factors and the resulting risks. Each organization is free to adapt its psychosocial risk assessment and management program to its specifics.

Psychosocial risk investigation and analysis can be performed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. To support psychosocial risk assessment, ILO and EU-OSHA provide employers, organizational psychologists, managers, and other occupational health and safety actors with guides and informational materials on possible risks in organizations. They also propose methods and techniques such as interviews, observation sheets, semi-structured questionnaires, and risk severity/intensity matrices (Kalkis et al., 2019).

Evolution of quantitative methods at international and national levels

With the advancement of applied research, standardized instruments for psychosocial risk assessment have emerged:

- *COPSOQ – Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire*, developed by experts from the National Institute of Occupational Health, Copenhagen, Denmark (Kristensen, Hannerz, Hogh, and Borge, 1997). It includes long, short, and adaptable international versions covering six axes: work demands; work organization and content; interpersonal relations and leadership quality; work-individual interface; professional values; health and well-being (Liță & Secu, 2016).
- *QPSNordic* – Scandinavian questionnaire covering fundamental psychological and social factors at work, organized into activity, organizational, and individual modules (Asberg, Wannstrom, Peterson, Nygren, Gustavsson, 2008; apud Simonescu, 2019).
- *System ECO Questionnaire (2004–2020)* – correlates organizational climate factors with psychosomatic symptoms assessed via the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (Constantin, 2020).

According to the EU-OSHA (2020) methodology, the psychosocial risk assessment and management process includes: (1) identifying risks and exposed individuals; (2) evaluating risks and setting priorities; (3) deciding on preventive measures; (4) implementing established measures; and (5) monitoring and reviewing the situation.

Several operational tools were proposed for each stage. For stage 1 (risk and exposure identification): observation sheets (Annexes 2 and 3), interview guides (Annex 4), and semi-structured and structured questionnaires (Annexes 1, 5, 6). Stage 2 (risk evaluation and prioritization) uses the risk matrix (Annex 7). Stage 3 (decision-making on preventive measures) applies the risk classification matrix (Annex 8). Stage 4 (implementation) includes instructions and concrete actions (Annexes 9, 10, 11) to support organizational interventions.

2.3 Analysis of documentation and tools for occupational health and safety in the Republic of Moldova

2.3.1 Regulatory framework on occupational health and safety in Republic of Moldova

Occupational health and safety is a fundamental pillar in guaranteeing employee rights, aiming to ensure safe and health-promoting working conditions, both physically and mentally.

To assess the extent to which psychosocial risks are reflected in legislation of the Republic of Moldova, a document analysis method was used (cf. Chelcea, 2004), following steps such as defining study objectives, identifying and selecting key legal documents (national and international, including the Constitution of Moldova, Labor Code, Law No. 186/2008, ILO and EU regulations), categorizing information via key term identification, analyzing the frequency and context of terms, and drawing conclusions.

This analysis sought to identify provisions on managing professional risks, both physical and psychosocial, highlighting gaps that necessitate legislative adjustments.

Thus, the normative acts were analyzed to identify provisions regarding the management of occupational risks, both physical and psychosocial. This approach involved not only structuring and comparing the existing legislative frameworks but also highlighting omissions in the current regulations that explicitly address psychosocial risks, thereby underlining the need for regulatory adjustments in this direction.

2.2.3 Psychological aspects regarding the legislative framework in addressing psychosocial risks

By comparing the national regulatory framework of the Republic of Moldova with international standards, in order to assess the degree of alignment of legislation regarding the management of psychosocial risks in the workplace, we refer to two important international reference frameworks – the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the European Union (EU), which have established clear guidelines for the protection of employees against psychosocial risks.

It is noteworthy that European legislation is based on several criteria in its development process. *Employer accountability* – Employers in the EU are obligated to assess psychosocial risks, implement preventive measures, and ensure a safe and healthy work environment, including mental and emotional well-being. *Protection of mental health* – Mental health is explicitly integrated into occupational health and safety policies, and occupational stress, moral harassment, and workplace violence are recognized as major factors affecting workers' health, with European policies mandating specific measures to combat them. *Clarity of sanctions* – In the national legislation of states with well-developed policies for managing psychosocial risks, adapted from EU directives, sanctions for failing to protect mental health are clear and enforceable, including administrative fines, civil and criminal liability, and the obligation to remedy moral damage suffered by the employee. *Access to justice for victims* – Affected employees have clear and effective access to justice; they can report to national supervisory bodies, file complaints in courts, and benefit from protection against retaliation following a complaint.

Following these criteria, the European Union has developed a comprehensive legislative framework regarding occupational health and safety. We mention here only a few of these acts that also aim to regulate psychosocial risks. *Comprehensive risk assessment* - is regulated by Directive 89/391/EEC, which requires employers to evaluate all occupational risks, including psychosocial ones, and to take appropriate measures to prevent stress and other forms of mental health deterioration. *Prevention of work-related stress* – as provided by the European Framework Agreement on Work-Related Stress (2004) signed by European social partners, recognizes work-related stress as a collective problem that must be addressed through organizational strategies and workplace-level interventions. *Combating harassment and violence* – addressed through the European Framework Agreement on Harassment and Violence at Work (2007), which establishes measures for preventing and managing these risks, aiming to protect employees from abusive behaviors that may affect their mental and physical health.

It is noted that the national legislation of the Republic of Moldova partially addresses these aspects by including terms related to “dignity at work” and “sexual harassment” in the Labour Code; however, it does not develop clear preventive measures or mechanisms for evaluating and monitoring psychosocial risks, as required by EU directives. The lack of detailed regulations regarding occupational stress or the prevention of psychological violence leaves a legislative gap that needs to be addressed to align with European requirements.

Thus, it is essential that Moldovan legislation includes terms such as *moral harassment*, *psychological and physical violence*, and *occupational stress*, as these reflect the complex realities of psychosocial risks and allow their legal recognition and management.

From a psychological perspective, the effects of exposure to unaddressed psychosocial risks can be severe: chronic anxiety, depression, burnout syndrome, sleep disorders, decreased professional motivation, etc. In the absence of legal protection mechanisms, employees internalize professional traumas, which negatively affect both their mental health and work productivity.

We consider that the use of clear terminology in legislation creates a framework for validating employees’ psychological suffering. When legislation uses vague or no terms at all, the likelihood that certain risks will remain unaddressed increases. The absence of a legal designation is equivalent to the absence of a social identity for the problem, which can prevent individuals from recognizing their right to protection and support.

2.3.3 Tools and practices used by occupational health and safety offices

In the Republic of Moldova, the management of occupational risks, particularly physical risks in the workplace, is regulated by a well-defined legislative framework, based on Law no. 186 of 10.07.2008 on Occupational Safety and Health, as well as Government Decision no. 95 of 05.02.2009. The role of the occupational health and safety (OHS) specialist, included in the Classification of Occupations of the Republic of Moldova (CORM), is essential in ensuring a safe work environment in compliance with legal standards. The main responsibilities of the OHS specialist include: identifying and evaluating occupational risks; developing and implementing preventive measures; monitoring working conditions; organizing periodic training sessions for employees; investigating workplace accidents; coordinating with competent authorities; and continuously updating domain-specific documentation.

Responsibility for compliance with safety standards is shared among the OHS specialist, the management team, and employees. In large institutions, direct supervision of working conditions often falls to department heads and involved workers, who are required to check workplace safety before starting activities. Each employee signs an individual training record, implying personal commitment to adhering to occupational safety standards. Considering the effectiveness of the current model for managing physical risks, it is proposed to extend this model to psychosocial risks as well, through the active involvement of the entire management team.

CHAPTER 3. Perceptions, Manifestations, and Management of Psychosocial Risks in Local Organizations

This chapter proposes an argumentative analysis of the cultural and social factors influencing perceptions of psychosocial risks, as well as a study investigating the level of awareness of factors generating such risks among the population. It also identifies the most frequent psychosocial risk factors encountered by employees in the Republic of Moldova. The studies presented highlight employees’ specific perceptions regarding psychosocial risks, providing a foundation for the development of risk management strategies adapted to the local context.

3.1 Cultural and social factors influencing the perception of psychosocial risks in the Republic of Moldova: arguments and syntheses based on studies

The influence of cultural and social factors on the perception of psychosocial risks within the specific context of the Republic of Moldova emphasizes the relevance of a contextualized approach in formulating organizational and public policies for mental health protection in the workplace. The analysis starts from the premise that risk perception is determined not only by objective working conditions but also by cultural dimensions and traditional values that shape attitudes toward psychological health and related interventions.

In the local context, work culture has its roots in traditions and values transmitted across generations. Practices such as *șezători* and *clăci* exemplify community solidarity and cooperation, where work was integrated into social and cultural life. These practices reflect a community-oriented work culture, reinforcing social cohesion and alleviating stress through belonging and collaboration. This traditional work culture, in which family and community values occupy a central role, persists today in the Republic of Moldova. However, in the current context, these values can also pose obstacles to the professional recognition and management of psychosocial risks, as emotional and mental health issues continue to be treated privately (within families) or socially stigmatized.

The economic structure of the Republic of Moldova, marked by instability, massive external migration, and poor working conditions in certain sectors, further increases employees' vulnerability to psychosocial risks. While migration can generate benefits through the transfer of skills and professional experiences, it also carries significant negative effects, such as labor exploitation under illegal conditions, with a major impact on the mental health of migrants.

A low perception of the importance of mental health in occupational settings is determined by the absence of coherent public policies, the lack of specialized services, and the limited awareness among employees and employers. The absence of active institutional measures for managing psychosocial risks reinforces the impression that mental health is a secondary, marginalized issue compared to the physical dimensions of work.

From the above, the need emerges for a reconceptualization of organizational culture and the national legislative framework, so that multidisciplinary interventions—based both on traditional values and international standards—are integrated to promote a healthy, equitable, and sustainable occupational climate.

3.2 Research design

The aim of the empirical research is to analyze the perceptions of different categories of employees regarding psychosocial risks, while also elucidating their manifestations and management practices in various local organizations, in order to develop practical recommendations for more effective psychosocial risk management.

Objectives of the empirical research

1. Identify the most common psychosocial risks, as well as employee perceptions and levels of awareness regarding psychosocial risks in the Republic of Moldova.
2. Evaluate how psychosocial risks manifest and how they are managed in various types of organizations within the local context.
3. Adapt assessment and management tools for psychosocial risks to the specifics of organizations in the Republic of Moldova, taking into account certain cultural, legislative, and sectoral particularities.
4. Develop locally adapted recommendations to enhance the efficiency of psychosocial risk management strategies in local organizations.

Research methods and techniques

In the research presented in this chapter, empirical methods were employed, such as *interviews and questionnaires, observation, and case studies*, to collect relevant data on perceptions, manifestations, and management practices of psychosocial risks in local organizations (see **Table 4**).

Table 4. Investigated aspects, research instruments used, and number of subjects

Investigated aspects	Research methods and instruments	Number of subjects
Main psychosocial risks in the workplace and employees' perceptions of them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Questionnaire for identifying psychosocial risks</i> – identification and assessment of psychosocial risks existing within an organization (items were adapted from a classification proposed in the Study on the development of safety and health requirements for preventing workers' exposure to psychosocial risks, National Institute for Research and Development for Labor Protection "Al. Darabont", Bucharest, 2013, see Annex 5) 	384 participants
Case study no. 1. Manifestations and management of psychosocial risks within an educational institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire for the assessment of organizational climate – exploring teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding the organizational climate in educational institutions during the pandemic (adapted by the author after the "Organizational Climate" questionnaire, proposed by Constantin, 2004, see, Annex 1) • Psychosocial risk assessment matrix – assessing and prioritizing psychosocial risks identified in the organization (developed by the author, see, Annex 7) • Psychosocial risk classification matrix – classifying psychosocial risks according to levels of influence and involvement and identifying the departments or individuals responsible, including the deadlines required for implementing intervention actions, developed by the author, see, Annex 8) 	25 participants
Case study no. 2. Manifestations and management methods of psychosocial risks within a non-governmental organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychosocial Risk Assessment Matrix (see Annex 7) • Psychosocial Risk Classification Matrix (see Annex 8) • Observation Sheet for Assessing Psychosocial Risks at Work – collecting relevant information to understand factors that may negatively influence employees' mental health, performance and well-being (developed by the author, see Annex 2) • Observation Sheet for Assessing Personnel – assessing employees' behavior, emotional state, performance and physical signs (developed by the author, see Annex 3) 	23 participants

Case study no. 3. Manifestations and management methods of psychosocial risks within an it (e-commerce) company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview guide for assessing psychosocial risks at work – in-depth exploration of employees’ experiences related to psychosocial risks at work, psychosocial risk factors and their impact on health and professional performance, as well as applied or necessary solutions (adapted from Cojocaru, Șeremet and Zubco, 2022, Annex 4) • Questionnaire for identifying psychosocial risks (see, Annex 5) • Questionnaire for assessing managerial actions in managing psychosocial risks – providing feedback and guidance on actions that can be taken by managers to manage psychosocial risks in the organization (items were adapted from a classification proposed in the Study on the Development of Safety and Health Requirements for Preventing Workers’ Exposure to Psychosocial Risks, National Institute for Research and Development for Labor Protection “Al. Darabont”, Bucharest, 2013, see, Annex 6) • Psychosocial Risk Assessment Matrix (see Annex 7) • Psychosocial Risk Classification Matrix (see Annex 8) 	15 participants
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Case study design used in the research

Introduction: Description of the general organizational context, the importance of managing psychosocial risks, and justification for selecting the organization for study.

Purpose: Identification and management of psychosocial risks in different types of organizations.

O1: Identification of psychosocial risks and their causes (data analysis and interpretation).

O2: Evaluation of risk exposure through analysis of probability and impact and prioritization of risks.

O3: Clarification of the psychosocial risk management mechanism.

O4: Proposal of recommendations for developing a psychosocial risk management program.

O5: Implementation of a prevention and intervention program for psychosocial risks.

Presentation of the organization

Description of the field of activity, organizational structure, and activity specifics that may influence psychosocial risks.

Sample

Description of study participants (number, gender distribution, age, nationality, etc.) and grouping (e.g., control group and intervention group, if applicable).

Identification of psychosocial risks

Research methods used (questionnaires, interviews, observation sheets, etc.).

Classification of identified psychosocial risks (e.g., occupational stress, lack of social support, lack of autonomy, verbal abuse, etc).

Data analysis and interpretation

Thematic coding (for qualitative data).

Descriptive statistical analysis (for quantitative data).

Comparison of results obtained from different data collection methods.

Risk assessment methods

Use of a risk matrix to classify and prioritize risks (Annex 5).

Determination of the psychosocial risk management mechanism (Annex 6).

Prevention and intervention strategies (primary, secondary, and tertiary interventions).

Monitoring and evaluation – assessment of reference indicators to verify the impact of measures on employees' well-being and organizational dysfunctions.

Conclusions and recommendations – synthesis of main findings and proposal of recommendations to improve psychosocial risk management strategies.

3.3 Employees' perceptions in the Republic of Moldova regarding psychosocial risks

Through items requiring open-ended responses, participants were asked to list psychosocial risks encountered in various organizations, including those where they are employed. The study also aimed to evaluate employees' level of knowledge regarding psychosocial risks associated with the workplace and to identify whether there are risks specifically relevant to the local population.

The results suggest that 30% of respondents identified stress as a significant psychosocial risk. However, they were unable to clearly describe what exactly causes their stress. This indicates that, while they are aware of stress, *they do not fully understand the factors that generate it or are unable to articulate these causes clearly*. Consequently, awareness of specific risks may be underestimated, and employees might not be fully prepared to identify and manage sources of workplace stress.

The frequency of taking sick leave in the past year revealed the following results: 1) never – 199 participants (51.6%); 2) very rarely – 128 participants (33.2%); 3) sometimes – 47 participants (12.2%); 4) often – 4 participants (1%); 5) very often – 3 participants (0.8%); 6) always – 5 participants (1.3%)

The frequency of attending work while sick or exhausted in the past year showed: 1) never – 33 participants (8.6%); 2) very rarely – 81 participants (21%); 3) sometimes – 124 participants (32.2%); 4) often – 99 participants (25.7%); 5) very often – 32 participants (8.3%); 6) always – 16 participants (4.2%)

From these data, several **assumptions** can be made.

- *Presenteeism* is a phenomenon where employees attend work even when they are ill or exhausted. The study shows that 38.2% of employees often go to work under such conditions, while only 8.6% reported never doing so. This behavior may be driven by fear of job loss, performance pressure, or lack of adequate support for employee health within the organization. However, presenteeism can reduce productivity, increase error rates, and exacerbate employees' health issues.
- *Excessive work demands* were reported often by 25.63% of employees and very often by 13.33%.
- *Frequent and demanding contact with clients or internal staff* can be a significant risk source. Approximately 20.5% of employees reported facing difficult interactions often.
- *Lack of consultation and information before major organizational changes* can lead to uncertainty, stress, and decreased morale; 28.6% of employees reported being inadequately informed about changes affecting them.
- *Work-life imbalance* – when employees fail to maintain a healthy balance between work and personal life, negative effects on well-being may arise, such as chronic

fatigue, reduced job satisfaction, and difficulties in personal relationships. Data indicate that 27.6% of employees experience this issue often or always.

- *Inadequate working conditions* (extreme temperatures, poor lighting, excessive noise) were reported often by 14.5% and very often by 9.6% of employees.
- *Tendency to blame and deny problems* – in a culture where blame and denial prevail, employees may experience high stress and insecurity. Data show that 32.3% notice this sometimes, and 14.8% often.
- *Lack of recognition and adequate rewards* is a problem sometimes reported by 27.9% of employees and often by 15.6%, potentially leading to reduced motivation and performance.
- Employees may experience *confusion and frustration* when asked to adopt conflicting or contradictory behaviors, manifested through stress and decreased job satisfaction. Approximately 18.2% reported encountering this role confusion often.
- *Inadequate training* – about 46% of employees sometimes face insufficient training.
- *Frequent interruptions and distractions* are significant factors affecting productivity and mental health; 23.7% of employees reported experiencing these issues often.
- *Lack of effective communication and consultation* within organizations can create a hostile and confusing work environment. According to data, 36.6% sometimes experience communication gaps, while 12.5% experience them often.
- *Repetitive tasks* – monotonous or repetitive activities were reported often by 11.5% of employees.
- *Lack of control over work activities* – 28.7% sometimes experience this issue, and 8.4% often.
- *Lack of social support within the organization* can severely impact employees' mental health; 30.2% sometimes feel socially unsupported.
- *Exposure to traumatic events and emotional demands* is common in professions such as healthcare, law enforcement, or social work. According to the study, 17.8% sometimes face such events.
- *Inadequate employee adaptation to job requirements* can lead to stress and reduced performance; 34.5% reported difficulties adapting sometimes.
- *Lack of identification with and attachment to the company* was reported by 32.5% of employees.
- *Poor interpersonal relationships* – 39.1% of employees reported this as a very rarely encountered issue, and 24.6% reported it as sometimes present.

3.4 Comparative analysis of case studies

The case studies, conducted within local organizations (educational institution, NGO, IT company), aimed to identify and assess psychosocial risks and propose intervention strategies.

The case study conducted within the secondary vocational education institution highlights the major psychosocial risks faced by teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the need to implement post-pandemic prevention and management measures.

The case study within a non-governmental organization highlighted the unique challenges in this sector, where employees are exposed to risks related to multiple role stress, overloaded workload, insufficient social support, fixed-term employment contracts which accentuate career uncertainty and lack of professional progression. These risks are aggravated by authoritarian leadership style and lack of effective communication between employees and management, which contributes to a hostile organizational climate and lowers staff morale.

The case study from the IT sector (e-commerce) highlights the importance of psychosocial risk management for organizational stability and employee performance, showing that the implemented psychosocial risk management program had a positive impact on work productivity and staff retention.

In this section, we also proposed a comparative analysis of the case studies, to identify similarities and differences in the manifestation of psychosocial risks (see **Table 6**).

Table 6. Comparative analysis of psychosocial risks across three organizational case studies

Category	Case study 1 – educational institution	Case study 2 – NGO	Case study 3 – IT Company (e-commerce)
Context	COVID-19 pandemic, online teaching activity, institutional pressure	Activism, social projects, fixed-term contracts	Digitalized work, automation, interactions with demanding clients – online
Main psychosocial risks	Lack of emotional rewards, social isolation – limited communication, overload, lack of control over the situation, effort–reward imbalance, lack of social and emotional support.	Moral harassment/authoritarian leadership style, overload, simultaneous assumption of multiple roles, dysfunctional interpersonal relationships, reduced professional autonomy, effort–reward imbalance, role ambiguity and excessive responsibility, perceptions of injustice and inequity at the workplace, uncertainty regarding job stability.	Verbal violence from clients, lack of mobility during the day, reduced social support, performance pressure, visual stress, overload, lack of involvement in decision-making, microcommunication.
Leadership style	Delegative – reduced impact on performance in the absence of support	Authoritarian – amplifies stress and demotivation	Participative – reduces the impact of risks and enhances performance
Presence or absence of a risk management mechanism in the organization	There is a functional mechanism for managing physical risks, but the need to integrate a psychosocial approach into educational policies is emerging.	The mechanism is almost nonexistent, limited to compliance with minimal formalities (e.g., fire safety trainings); there is a need to develop a functional system that includes processes for evaluation, monitoring, and structural interventions addressing psychosocial risks.	The mechanism is underdeveloped, limited to a few basic formalities (e.g., workstation/monitor safety training); it is necessary to develop a functional system that includes risk assessment – including psychosocial risks – continuous monitoring, and the implementation of tailored structural interventions.

Proposed levels of intervention	At the macrosocial level: through clear public policies, professional training, and institutional support. At the mesosocial level: creating a healthy organizational climate and ensuring fair distribution of tasks. At the microsocial level: autonomy, collegial support, and work–life balance are essential.	At the macrosocial level, in the NGO sector, it is essential to harmonize requirements from funders and authorities to ensure strategic coherence and operational stability. At the mesosocial level, a participative leadership style, effective communication, adherence to job descriptions, and recognition of employees' efforts are recommended. Social support, work–life balance, and stable contracts are proposed. At the microsocial level, increasing individual autonomy and control is necessary.	At the macrosocial level, Government Decision no. 819 of July 1, 2016, approved the provisions of Directive 90/270/EEC regarding minimum health and safety requirements for work at display screen equipment, and contractual negotiations were conducted to prevent overwork (without success). At the mesosocial level, the management team implemented training sessions to manage verbal violence from clients, provided regular feedback and social support, and organized team-building activities and open communication between employees and managers. At the microsocial level, employees were supported in developing autonomy in work organization, applying emotion-management techniques, observing breaks, and strengthening informal social relationships to enhance their psychosocial well-being.
Identified organizational dysfunctions	Deficient relationships with students, contributing to decreased academic achievement. Negative emotional manifestations among teaching staff, such as anxiety, frustration, fatigue, and insecurity, simultaneously affecting professional performance and personal well-being. Constant tension between professional demands and personal resources.	Alarming staff turnover of 30% within just six months. Deficient vertical communication, limiting the staff's ability to ask pertinent questions and leading to errors in work activities. Social withdrawal and lack of engagement observed, reflected in emotional states such as sadness, irritability, and defensive reactions. These manifestations are accompanied by physical signs of fatigue and health complaints.	High staff turnover driven by the pressure to meet required performance targets. Physical and mental exhaustion among employees. Segregation based on ethnic criteria.

3.5 Psychosocial intervention program implemented in case study no. 3: manifestations and management of psychosocial risks within an it company (e-commerce)

The psychosocial intervention program implemented in an organizational setting in the Republic of Moldova, an IT company (e-commerce) (cf. Zubco, 2024), aimed to identify and manage psychosocial risks within the organization to establish a balanced relationship between productivity/quality and employee well-being.

Specific objectives included identifying psychosocial risks, evaluating their probability and impact, classifying them according to levels of intervention, and designing and implementing an integrated prevention and remediation program.

The participant group consisted of 12 employees who took part in the intervention program, all operators, along with 3 members of the management team. The 12 operators were divided into two homogeneous groups based on French communication skills and gender distribution.

Risk identification was conducted using *structured interviews* (Annex 4) and *questionnaires* (Annexes 5 and 6). Risk analysis was performed using the *psychosocial risk assessment matrix* (Annex 7), evaluating both the probability of risk occurrence and its consequences. The severity of psychosocial risks was assessed according to standards from the International Labour Organization (ILO), the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), and the World Health Organization (WHO). Additionally, *the ability to manage psychosocial risk factors at the second-level management was evaluated* (Annex 8).

Identified psychosocial risks included verbal aggression from clients, lack of mobility, visual stress, chronic fatigue, excessive workload, lack of managerial support, lack of involvement in decision-making, and micro-communication. Interventions were designed at three levels: primary, secondary, and tertiary.

This research highlights the importance of a *legal framework for managing psychosocial risks*, emphasizing the role of European Directives (e.g., Directive 90/270/EEC) and their transposition into national legislation (Government Decision No. 819/2016 of 01.07.2016). The study also argues for *the implementation of an integrated psychosocial risk management model based on a coordinated and contextualized approach, following the EU-OSHA cycle (continuous process)*, which provides a logical and operational pathway with applicable methodologies for each stage: identification, assessment, planning, intervention, and monitoring.

The effectiveness of this model was empirically validated through the organizational intervention, *demonstrating increased productivity across all performance indicators* and improved perception of organizational support. These results were statistically confirmed using the t-test, with detailed values available in the general conclusions of the research.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Knowledge and awareness of psychosocial risks in the workplace are essential elements for ensuring a healthy and productive organizational climate. Psychosocial risks, such as occupational stress, harassment, third-party violence, exposure to traumatic events, under- or overwork, poor interpersonal relationships at work, lack of social support, lack of control, deficient organizational culture, insufficient managerial support, perceptions of injustice and inequity at work, conflict between professional and personal life, poor management of organizational changes, inadequate working conditions and equipment, role ambiguity and excessive responsibility, effort-reward imbalance, shift work and irregular working hours, lack of attachment to the company, low job satisfaction, lack of creativity and repetitive tasks, career uncertainty and lack of professional advancement, and susceptibility to stress based on individual variations in temperament and skills, can have major negative effects on employees' mental and physical health. Additionally, these risks can affect individual and organizational performance, generating significant costs through absenteeism/presenteeism, decreased productivity, and employee turnover, thereby creating organizational dysfunctions.

Accordingly, based on the arguments presented, the research problem addressed in this study can be summarized as the need to establish a theoretical and empirical framework for developing tools for investigating, assessing, and intervening in psychosocial risk issues, tailored to the needs of local organizations.

To analyze the phenomenon in the Republic of Moldova, we examined the *national regulatory framework in comparison with international standards* and conducted a *comprehensive theoretical and empirical study*:

1. Psychosocial risks at the workplace result from the complex interaction between professional factors (physical and psychosocial), individual factors (derived from human psychological functioning), and organizational management, with their manifestation influenced by the *control-demand ratio*, *person-environment fit*, and *effort-reward balance* (Chapter 1, cf. Zubco, 2024).

2. These risks have significant consequences for employees' mental and physical health, as well as for the socio-organizational environment, with effects that can persist even in the absence of direct risk factors and the potential to create organizational dysfunctions (Chapter 3, cf. Zubco, 2023 and 2024).

3. In the Republic of Moldova, the legal framework for occupational health and safety does not explicitly regulate psychosocial risks, and empirical analysis reveals limited perception of these risks, influenced by cultural, economic, and social factors, as well as the absence of effective management mechanisms (Chapter 2, cf. Zubco, 2022).

4. Effective management of psychosocial risks requires an integrated, contextualized, and coordinated organizational approach that targets the prevention, mitigation, and monitoring of the impact of interventions at the individual, organizational, and societal levels. Therefore, a systemic, integrated approach adapted to the local context is needed, involving authorities, employers, and employees, as well as the development of a clear and applicable regulatory framework (Chapter 2, cf. Zubco, 2021, 2023, 2024, and 2025).

5. The empirical study demonstrated that perceptions of psychosocial risks in the Republic of Moldova are influenced by a complex combination of cultural, economic, and social factors. Stress, excessive workload, and burnout were identified as the primary psychosocial risks, while a lack of knowledge regarding psychosocial risk factors among a significant portion of the population highlights the need for widespread awareness campaigns. The cultural specificity of Moldovans, reflected in the phenomenon of presenteeism, demonstrates a strong attitude anchored in responsibility and loyalty toward the workplace. Fear of job loss, performance pressures, and lack of adequate health support mechanisms indicate an organizational culture where job security and employee well-being are often undervalued. The *implementation of a psychosocial intervention program in local organizations* demonstrated significant efficiency in increasing productivity and reducing employee turnover. Specifically, average sales increased significantly from 29.12 to 37.64 ($t(5) = 3.69, p < 0.05$), while average returns decreased from 9.30 to 5.50 ($t(5) = 4.53, p < 0.05$), and the client rating increased from 7.75 to 8.14 ($t(5) = -3.06, p < 0.05$). Compared to the control group, which experienced a 50% staff turnover, the intervention group maintained complete team stability. Moreover, the intervention group achieved superior results across all indicators: average number of calls handled (1,221 vs. 974), conversion rate to sales (37.64% vs. 29.87%), percentage of returned products (5.50% vs. 8.58%), and average customer rating (8.14 vs. 8.08). These results confirmed the practical value of such a model (Chapter 3, cf. Zubco, 2023, 2024, and 2025).

Recommendations for the use of results

Governmental and institutional levels (*Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, Labor Inspectorate, Government*) should develop public policies and mechanisms for managing psychosocial risks, which should meet the following requirements:

- *Adapt policies to the local context* – taking into account the customs and socio-cultural specifics of the Republic of Moldova.
- *Introduce key terms related to psychosocial risks into legislative codes* – such as moral harassment, psychological violence, occupational stress, harmonized across different legislative frameworks.

- *Regulate employer responsibilities/obligations* – regarding the management of psychosocial risks, establishing sanctions in case of non-compliance, and ensuring victims' access to justice, including protection against retaliation.
- *Labor Inspectorate should develop appropriate tools and procedures* – including clear guidelines for identifying and reducing psychosocial risks – and ensure the training of occupational health and safety specialists regarding identification, analysis, and management of psychosocial risks at the workplace.

Organizational level (*management, human resources departments, managers, occupational health and safety specialists*):

- *Integrate prevention strategies into organizational policies* – through psychosocial intervention programs.
- *Implement a system for periodic assessment and monitoring of psychosocial risks* – using questionnaires, interviews, and observation sheets to identify risks, at-risk individuals, assess severity, and determine internal management mechanisms.
- *Manage psychosocial risks in the digital environment* – by complying with national legislation and developing intervention programs adapted to new forms of work (telework, hybrid work, etc.).
- *Promote diversity and inclusion* – by adopting strong non-discrimination policies and fostering a work climate based on mutual respect and fairness.
- *Strengthening the role of leadership in preventing psychosocial risks* – by promoting an ethical, participatory leadership style focused on team support and occupational stress prevention.
- *Adopt an integrated approach* – combining interventions on physical factors with interventions on psychosocial factors in the work environment.
- *Implement a coordinated and context-adapted approach* – by developing interventions tailored to organizational specifics, involving all decision-makers actively in the process of preventing and managing psychosocial risks.

Individual level (*employees and managers as direct participants in professional activity*):

- *Integrate psychosocial risks into continuous professional training* – promoting knowledge and understanding of these risks for every employee, with particular emphasis on training managers to recognize signs of stress, support the team, and intervene promptly.
- *Raise awareness of the impact of psychosocial risks on oneself and the organization* – enabling proactive measures to prevent negative effects on mental health, professional performance, and the overall work climate.
- *Develop self-regulation skills and establish healthy boundaries* – encouraging employees to identify their psychological needs, manage stress factors, and adopt protective behaviors against psychosocial risks.

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ANNOTATION

ZUBCO Luminița, “Psychosocial risks and dysfunctions in the organizational environment: findings, solutions, and interventions” Doctoral Thesis in Psychology, Chișinău, 2025.

Thesis structure: Introduction, three chapters, general conclusions and recommendations, bibliography comprising 148 sources, 12 appendices, 148 pages of core text, 8 figures, and 17 tables. The obtained results are published in 10 scientific papers.

Keywords: psychosocial risks, dysfunctions, risk matrix, organizational policies.

Research aim: To determine the theoretical, methodological, and empirical foundations for investigating, analyzing, evaluating, and managing psychosocial risks in organizational settings by adapting international models to local specificities, with the aim of developing effective interventions for preventing psychosocial risks and organizational dysfunctions.

Research objectives: (1) to analyze theories, explanatory models, and recent trends in the study of psychosocial risks, aiming to clarify theoretical and methodological aspects of their analysis, assessment, and management in the workplace; (2) to examine normative acts and mechanisms for managing psychosocial risks and dysfunctions in local organizations, in order to assess the degree of alignment with international occupational health and safety standards; (3) to establish a strategy for analyzing, evaluating, and managing psychosocial risks and dysfunctions in local organizations (based on tools recommended by international guidelines and platforms, as well as instruments developed by the author); (4) to collect and interpret data regarding the analysis, evaluation, and management of psychosocial risks and dysfunctions in local organizations; (5) to design and implement a psychosocial intervention program aimed at preventing and reducing the negative effects of psychosocial risks and dysfunctions in local organizations.

Scientific novelty and originality: The study offers an integrated approach to psychosocial risks, based on their theoretical and empirical analysis, as well as the development of a program model for managing psychosocial risks, applicable in local organizations. The research stands out not only for synthesizing existing theories and explanatory models but also for correlating them with recent trends and international practices promoted by institutions such as the ILO and EU-OSHA, providing an updated perspective on the phenomenon. By examining the regulatory framework and mechanisms for managing psychosocial risks at the organizational level, the study contributes to identifying gaps and formulating recommendations tailored to the local context. An innovative dimension of the research lies in the introduction of specific instruments – standardized questionnaires, interview guides, and observation sheets – along with evaluation and intervention matrices, which allow for the analysis of risks according to frequency, severity, costs, and levels of managerial responsibility. The work emphasizes the importance of prevention, considered more effective than intervention, and highlights the essential role of the managerial team and the organizational psychologist in mitigating risks and dysfunctions. In the context of digitalization and the expansion of telework, the research provides solutions for developing sustainable, balanced organizational policies and practices aligned with European and international standards in occupational health and safety.

Contributions to solving the scientific problem: (1) The theoretical and empirical analysis of psychosocial risks highlighted their complexity and revealed current research directions, leading to the proposal of an integrated theoretical framework that facilitates the analysis and understanding of such risks in local organizations, serving as a foundation for developing management strategies; (2) The analysis of the legal and regulatory framework suggested the need for legislative adjustments and improvement of national and organizational policies in line with European and international directives; (3) The development of a strategy for analyzing, assessing, and managing psychosocial risks enabled the creation of a model applicable to local organizations; (4) The collection and interpretation of empirical data offered detailed insights into the prevalence and impact of these risks on employees, emphasizing the need for proactive intervention measures; (5) The design and implementation of a psychosocial intervention program led to the identification of actions targeting both organizations and employees, aimed at preventing and reducing psychosocial risks.

Theoretical significance: The thesis expands the specialized literature through a comprehensive analysis of psychosocial risk factors and the proposal of a multidimensional model for organizational intervention. The research also provides a rigorous theoretical foundation by clarifying, classifying, and contextualizing psychosocial risks, proposing nationally applicable solutions and enabling the investigation of their relationship with organizational dysfunctions. It contributes also with reference to the national regulatory framework by identifying legislative gaps in the Republic of Moldova and offering recommendations for harmonization with European and international standards.

Practical value: The findings can be applied to the development of occupational health and safety policies and the management of psychosocial risks within organizations. The integrated model for the analysis, assessment, and management of psychosocial risks, adapted to the local organizational context and including a psychosocial intervention program suitable for various professional settings, supports the identification, prevention, and reduction of organizational dysfunctions, enhancing performance, reducing staff turnover, and fostering a healthy organizational climate.

Implementation of scientific results: The research results were presented at national and international conferences and in scientific articles, and have been implemented in tools and psychosocial intervention programs.

ZUBCO LUMINIȚA

**PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS AND DYSFUNCTIONS IN THE
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AND INTERVENTIONS**

Specialty 511.01 – General psychology

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