

Corporate Security and Importance of Survey on the Working Environment

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Abstract

The effects of the implementation of corporate security procedures on employees are little studied and are not attributed special importance within the organisation. A deeper knowledge of the measures imposed by the corporation that infringe upon the basic freedoms of its employees, along with the consequences, is fundamental to understanding the stress to people working in areas exposed to greater security risk. Within their regulatory frameworks, corporations define security standards for the protection of information and procedures that enable them to operate in a highly competitive environment. The article focuses specifically on Slovenian private or public corporations that have control over certain parts of critical infrastructure and impose restrictive measures adopted on the basis of legal requirements or internal safety regulations. These measures, however, can strongly infringe on the privacy of employees, working in such organisations, and thus cause additional stress on individuals. The profession of security manager is inherently stressful on account of the circumstances and situations one has to face daily in risk management to ensure smooth functioning of the critical infrastructure.

Keywords: corporate security, workplace control, stress, security manager

1 Introduction

In a complex global environment, the functioning of an organisation is closely connected to effective implementation of corporate security, allowing the organization to control and manage security risks. During their operations, organisations face a whole series of risks that can broadly be divided into: external risks, risks resulting from internal factors, and a combination of both. Nevertheless, despite rapid technological development, it is the human factor that remains the vital segment in the security risk management process, and still generally presents the weakest link in the overall systematic provision of security. Social engineering, negligence, poor organisational culture and, consequently, poor security culture, ignorance and deliberate performance of illegal acts are factors that force the organisations to a more effective implementation of corporate security measures connected to the supervision of their employees in their basic work environment for the sake of security risk management. In addition to a more efficient risk control and management, this process, however, involves a certain level of stress on the personnel. Particular regard should be paid to the study and consideration of this phenomenon. A lack of consideration of this factor might turn all

systematic measures ineffective and even produce opposite effects. Today, stress occupies a very important position in the life of every individual and the society as a whole. There are several factors which influence the importance of stress awareness. We live in a rapidly changing world which requires adjustment in all areas. Awareness of the complexity of the high-tech environment, where there is an increased risk of errors with catastrophic consequences for the wider social environment, increases the presence of stress. As a result of unexpected critical situations, individuals are required to make fast and, above all, correct decisions within a very short period of time. This puts an individual into a very stressful situation, as poor or incorrect implementation or reaction may have dramatic detrimental effects. Another important factor associated with the growing interest of the professional and lay public in the occurrence and effects of stress is a wide range of potential stressors which are present in different contexts of man's life. On the one hand, there are areas of work covering a large number of activities associated with high demands and complexity of operation in a specific environment. Driskell and Salas (1996:3) point to the areas where such complexity, in relation to highly stressful operations, has already been studied in detail. These areas include aviation, military operations, emergency medical aid, mining, scuba diving, skydiving, police work, demining, fire fighting and others. Occupations associated with these areas of work are already stereotypically associated with a highly demanding work environment and stress to which people who perform such duties are exposed. On the other hand, one has to be aware of the fact that stress is also present in everyday life, for example when working in the office or driving a car (Newhouse, 2000:11-12). Even such environment and activities present a series of stressors which may interfere with or affect the smooth progress of activities, and cause a certain degree of stress in people. Stress has become a particularly major problem at the workplace. In addition to consequences on an individual's health and well-being, it also leads to high costs for organisations, and greatly reduces the economic performance and productivity. Along with a significant mental and psychological burden on the health of employees, stress is also reflected in the increased absenteeism, staff turnover, lack of corporate security, poor work ethic, lack of innovation and, above all, lower productivity (Cox and Gonzales, 2004). All of the above mentioned has a major impact on the productivity, cost increase, and competitiveness of organisations in a complex global economy. The problem of stress is present in both in the private and public sector, and cannot be avoided today. Organisations are largely focused on increasing productivity and profit, and tend to forget the importance of the capital represented by their employees. They are mostly unaware of the fact that costs associated with the prevention of stress are often much lower than the costs of measures taken to counter the effects of stress.

2 Literature overview and theoretical background of the research subject

In its widest sense, the term corporate security refers to any activity which identifies and implements all necessary systematic security risk control measures within an individual organisation. As such, it stands for one of the main operational functions of a corporation. To operate effectively, it needs to be implemented in close connection with all other key functions within the corporation. For appropriate security risk management in a corporation, the overall corporate security should necessarily involve security, continuous functioning and safety at work. The processes of corporate security provision form an indivisible whole of the umbrella corporation management which is manifested through corporate management and corporate social responsibility. The latter, in particular, puts the process of corporate security into a wider context of operation from the stand point of corporation in relation to the society as a whole in its operating environment. Personnel security is often perceived as a central

component of corporate security. In providing such measures, we are witnessing the occurrence of stress, which is to be discussed in detail in further analysis. The definition of stress is associated with a large number of different explanations, depending on the approach taken by the professional circle defining stress from its own perspective. Given below are several definitions of stress, which are important for further description of the research problem. Stress is defined as a discrepancy between requirements, on the one hand, and the ability to manage these requirements on the other. The relationship between the perception of requirements and the ability to withstand pressure has a decisive impact on the perception of stress, both negative and positive (Looker and Gregson, 1993:31). Stress is the reaction of an organism to stimuli from the environment, and includes the signs of defence and adaptation. It is the state of tension in an organism, which triggers the defence mechanism when the organism faces a threatening situation. This is followed by a non-specific reaction of the organism, which either leads to defence or potential resistance (Plozza in Poozi, 1994:12). Battison (1996:6) claims that stress is not merely a medical condition, but a combination of physical, mental and emotional feelings resulting from pressure, anxiety and fear. According to him, this is followed by a non-specific reaction of the organism, which either leads to defence or resistance. It should be noted that stress is a mass phenomenon presented in a number of definitions which include two primary focuses: (1) in most cases, stress is caused by someone/something outside the human body; (2) the consequences of stress are internal, psychological and physiological, and are described as tension or strain (Selič, 1999:11-12). The argument that stress can be uprooted cannot prevail, as stress is present in all areas of a person's life. It is an inevitable consequence of interpersonal relationships and the ever changing environment which calls for constant adaptation (Pettinger, 2002:56). Past physical threats have nowadays been joined by psychological threats which affect a person's self-esteem, social security, position in the society, relationship with family members, friends and colleagues (Looker and Gregson, 1993:27-28). Heller and Hindle (2001:767) argue, based on the results of their research, that stress affects not only individuals and organisations, but paralyses the entire country. It is the society that carries the cost of public institutions, for example the functioning of the public health system or treatment of those who suffer from stress-related health problems or have retired early on account of their health. Stress at the workplace is the second major problem in the European Union, and affects 28 percent of all workers. Research has shown that as much as 50–60 percent of all lost working days within the EU are closely related to the problem of stress (Cox and Gonzales, 2004:34).

3 Methods

The present article seeks to explore the problem of stress and stress factors affecting employees of organisations that manage a specific critical infrastructure. The conducted research mainly focuses on the measures implemented by corporations in the context of internal security provision¹. These factors are little studied in the work environment and not given special importance in the organisation. The knowledge of security measures, along with their consequences, used by the organisation to infringe on basic freedoms of its employees, is

¹ In this article, the term internal security refers to processes related to the classified information protection, operation in areas where control is greatly enhanced, implementation of security clearances of employees before the assumption of their duties and during the time of their employment, as well as other measures for the provision of security within the organisation.

fundamental to understanding the stress to people working in areas exposed to greater security risks. The basic purpose of this article is to study the above-mentioned problem.

Effective functioning of organisations requires awareness of the presence of stress among their employees. Such awareness constitutes an appropriate prerequisite for in-depth research, the results of which contribute to the implementation of activities required for the reduction of stress and thus for the increase of efficiency and satisfaction of employees. Until now, no research has been carried out in the wider environment on the influence of internal security measures as potential stressors, regarding the occurrence of stress among the employees of specific organisations that control critical infrastructure, where such measures are increasingly present and evident.

The present survey was conducted on the basis of a questionnaire prepared for the purpose of this research, and took place in October and November 2010. It was carried out anonymously, by voluntary participation of respondents. The questionnaires were distributed to 53 organisations that are primarily involved in the management of infrastructure classified as critical². The completed questionnaires were sent in by 40 organisations. The questionnaire was analysed for internal consistency, using the Cronbach's α coefficient. It was determined that its value was 0.712, which was hardly enough to ensure the reliability of the questionnaire (reliability means that repeated measurements of the same traits in the same subjects give the same results).

For the purpose of research in this article, the following hypothesis was set: »Restrictions at the workplace cause less stress to employees with a longer period of employment in the organisation.«

A quantitative research method or, more precisely, non-experimental quantitative research was used. Data were collected on the basis of a questionnaire prepared by the Institute for Corporate Security Studies for the purpose of this research. The research included 254 respondents, of whom 76.9 percent were male and 23.1 percent female. 25.3 percent of the responded population were in the age group 18–30, 39.7 percent in 31–40, 28.4 percent in 41–50, and 6.6 percent in 51–60 years of age.

4 Results

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to determine "to what extent the stated restrictions influence the relaxed atmosphere at the workplace". The evaluated independent variables were (1) the process of classified information protection, (2) work in security restricted areas and (3) continuous video surveillance at the workplace. Respondents made decisions on the basis of the five-level Likert scale, where 1 signified "very little" and 5 "very much". Assessment of the influential factors in the provision of individual corporate security measures has reached the following mean values and related standard deviations: the process of classified information protection has reached the mean value of 2.97 with a standard deviation of 1.090; work in security restricted areas has reached the mean value of 2.94 with a standard deviation of 1.182; finally, the continuous video surveillance at the workplace has

² »The Critical Infrastructure of the Republic of Slovenia« includes those capabilities and services that are of key importance to the country. Its disruption or destruction would have a significant impact on or severe implications for national security, economy, key social functions, health, security and protection and social welfare. The definition was adopted by the Inter-Governmental Group on Critical Infrastructure Protection during its 9th session on 29 January 2010. Areas of critical infrastructure operation are to be found in the following sectors: energy sector, information and communications systems, water, food, medical care, finance, law and order and state administration, transport, nuclear and chemical industry, space and research (Green Paper on a European Programme for Critical Infrastructure Protection).

reached the mean value of 3.19 with a standard deviation of 1.426. The above results show that respondents evaluated all three factors as relatively important restrictions which significantly affect the relaxed atmosphere at the workplace and cause stress. The highest mean value was perceived in the case of continuous video surveillance of the workplace. An important fact is also the relatively high dispersion of responses with the standard deviation of 1.426. A very high dispersion of responses was also seen in the other two variables. These factors are analysed in relation to age. The analysis tried to determine whether age has a significant impact on the dispersion of responses with regard to age groups of the respondent population. For the sake of transparency, two age groups were formed – from 18 to 40 years of age and from 41 to 61 years of age. These data are important to prove the hypothesis that "older employees with a longer period of employment in the organisation better cope with stress caused by corporate security measures at the workplace". The identified mean values show that the category of younger employees perceives the process of classified information protection as more restrictive than the older generation, while work in security restricted areas is perceived as equally restrictive by both age categories. Interestingly, the third factor, represented by continuous surveillance at the workplace, is perceived as more restrictive by the category of older employees. Another interesting piece of information is the fact that standard deviation of responses in all three categories is significantly higher for the category of older members. On average, employees who belong to the younger group perceive classified information protection as a more important stressor and a restrictive factor in their work environment than employees who belong to the older group. Given the fact that $F(1.318) = 0.906, 0.342 > 0.05$, it can be determined that these differences are not statistically significant. Similarly, the difference in the perception of continuous video surveillance at the workplace is also statistically insignificant, as $F(1.318) = 0.243, 0.972 > 0.05$. The same is true in the case of perception of work in security restricted areas, where $F(1.318) = 0.001, 0.972 < 0.05$, which means that differences between variances are statistically insignificant.

Shown below are the results of the X² test by which we attempted to test the relationship between age and three independent variables, assessed as stress factors among the employees of the surveyed organisations. As our case deals with larger tables, the value of the "Contingency coefficient" is taken as proof. The first example shows the relationship between age and the process of classified information protection. The correlation coefficient in this case is 0.079, which means that $P > 0.05$. A correlation between age and the impact of stress in the process of classified information protection cannot be demonstrated, therefore the hypothesis set for this case can be rejected.

In evaluating the correlation between age and work in security restricted areas, the value of Cramer's coefficient has reached the level of 0.172, which points to the fact that its statistical correlation value is higher. As $P > 0.05$, hypothesis is rejected. Again, no statistically significant correlation between age and work in security restricted areas as a potential stressor among the organisation members can be demonstrated. In evaluating the correlation between age and work in areas with continuous video surveillance, the value of Cramer's coefficient has reached the level of 0.173, which points to the fact that its statistical correlation value is higher. As $P > 0.05$, hypothesis is rejected, once again, no statistically significant correlation between age and work in security restricted areas as a potential stressor among organisation employees can be demonstrated.

5 Discussion

Results have shown that age is statistically not related to and has no significant effect on the perception of stress among security organisation employees. In our case, stress factors were defined as processes of classified information protection, work in security restricted areas, and

work in areas with continuous video surveillance. These factors were compared to two main age groups, namely from 18 to 40 years of age and from 41 to 61 years of age. Due to all of the above mentioned, the hypothesis that "restrictions at the workplace cause less stress to members with a longer period of employment in the organisation" is rejected. Nevertheless, it can be ascertained that respondents perceive the above-mentioned factors as stressful, as mean values of responses to the statements of stress highly exceed the arithmetic mean of the five-level Likert scale, and range in value from 2.89 to 3.24, depending on the group and the evaluated factor. The results still point to certain specific features which are characteristic of a particular age group with regard to the evaluated stress factor. Processes of classified information protection with regard to the occurrence of stress were evaluated as more important by respondents in the younger age group. This can be explained by the fact that most of the older employees began working in the time of the former common state of Yugoslavia, where security processes, social control, and safety culture were very pronounced. These processes were internalised during the socialisation phase and are still perceived as more common by the older generation. The younger generation, however, began working after the independence of the Republic of Slovenia when, for some time, classified information protection was not such an important value. During this time, the balance between the privacy of the state and an individual's right to be informed was in favour of the latter (Čaleta, 2008:250). After the integration in international organisations, Slovenia was forced to restore the security system to a higher level. The younger generation was thus faced with various dilemmas, brought about by the need for adequate and effective security system. On the other hand, there is a diametrically opposite situation in the perception of continuous video surveillance in the workplace. In this case it is the older generation that perceives this factor as more disturbing and stressful. This can be explained by the fact that the younger generation, up to the age of 40, grew up in the time of unprecedented technical and technological development, which also includes various forms of control, such as video cameras and similar. What the older generation perceived as fiction³ at the time of their socialisation in work processes, the younger generation perceives as a normal process which is not given much attention.

In conclusion it is necessary to emphasise that the effect of stress (which is the result of the implementation of corporate security) on members of organisations in control of critical infrastructure is little studied and not assigned special importance within the organisation. The knowledge of measures, along with their consequences, used by the organisation to infringe on basic freedoms of its employees, is fundamental to understanding the stress on employees working in such organisations.

It is important to be aware of the fact that these measures heavily infringe on the privacy of employees working in such organisations and thus cause additional stress in individuals. The military profession is inherently stressful on account of circumstances and situations which military personnel face daily and restrictive measures, taken by an organisation to provide internal security, serve only to intensify these stressful situations. More efficient operation of the organisation and reduction of stress on its members caused by the above-mentioned factors will require an organised approach to dealing with these problems. Stress may only be reduced on the basis of a continuous systemic approach, implemented as a continuous process from the time of arrival of an individual to the time of their retirement or termination of work in security organisations which are subject to the above-mentioned stress factors.

³ In his novel *1984*, Orwell wrote that "Big Brother is watching you", which may have been quite futuristic for that time, but is today a reality we have to live with.

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