

Fact sheet 2-B: "Recognition at work" indicator



Supplement to the Tool for Identifying Psychosocial Risk Factors in the Workplace

Indicators included in the tool

1- Work context and prevention measures in place

- A. Job and work context
- B. Illness absenteeism and presenteeism
- C. Occupational health activities or policy
- D. Activities or policy against violence and harassment
- E. Return-to-work activities or policy
- F. Work/life-balance activities or policy

2- Key components of work organization

- A. Workload
- B. Recognition at work**
- C. Social support of immediate supervisors
- D. Social support of colleagues
- E. Decision-making autonomy
- F. Information and communication

What is recognition at work?

This indicator refers to the different ways in which effort and achievement can be recognized, including remuneration, esteem, respect, equity, job security and prospects for promotion. The recognition must be focused on the work (i.e. the process) and not on the individual. Recognition practices must be genuine if the people for whom they are intended are to feel their positive effects.

This definition of recognition, which is based on the effort-reward imbalance model, assesses health effects relative to the effort made by workers. That effort may be linked to time constraints, workload, responsibilities or physical demands. The greater the imbalance between effort and recognition, the greater the health risks.

Examples of questions that can be asked to assess a person's recognition at work

- Do you get the respect you deserve from your supervisor and colleagues?
- Are your prospects for promotion satisfactory when you consider your efforts and achievements?
- Is your job security satisfactory?
- Is your salary satisfactory when you consider your efforts and achievements?
- Do you get the respect and esteem you deserve when you consider your efforts and achievements?
- Are you treated fairly at work?

Why be concerned about this?

Several studies have shown that work situations involving considerable effort combined with low recognition pose a risk for mental and cardiovascular health and musculoskeletal disorders.

In many workplaces, excessive use of so-called objective indicators to assess work, without in-depth knowledge of the work actually required, interferes with recognition. “Such assessment methods are far from able to gauge the difficulties and complexity of the work that must be done or to assess and recognize the efforts made to achieve the necessary results, taking into account the demands of the occupation and the professional standards that have to be met, as well as the means made available to workers. This lack of recognition undermines self-esteem and paves the way for the appearance of psychological symptoms (anxiety, depression), physiological symptoms (increased adrenaline secretion, increased blood pressure, sleep disruption) and behavioural symptoms (prescription drug and alcohol consumption, violence and aggression)” (Vézina et al. 2006 [Translation]). In contrast, recognition that attaches value in a formal or informal but sincere way to efforts made at work is a sign of respect and esteem for workers, as well as a powerful motivator that acts as a health protection factor.

What practices should be implemented?

Here are some examples of organizational and management practices likely to have a positive impact on the “recognition at work” indicator.

- Raise awareness among managers about workplace recognition and provide them with appropriate training
- Give priority to unobtrusive, repeated and sincere recognition practices that reflect the facts as much as possible and are related to the duties of the employee concerned
- Foster career development by granting educational leave, training and promotions in a fair manner
- Offer satisfactory wages and other conditions that recognize workers’ efforts and contributions (e.g. extra holidays). Provide overtime pay
- Congratulate workers when they come up with original ideas or new work methods designed to improve the performance of work or the work environment
- Show the same amount of appreciation for the efforts made by employees as for the results they obtain and assess their efforts regularly. Take an interest in what employees do on a day-to-day basis at work, and not only in the objectives they achieve
- Ask employees with more experience or special expertise to help develop training
- Pay attention to employees and show them respect in simple ways every day: remember to focus on the individual by thanking each person for the effort and time that he or she has devoted to a file or project, organize a lunch or special meeting to celebrate the completion of a project or the end of a particularly busy week, etc.

References and useful links

1. Siegrist, J. (1996). Adverse health effects of high effort low-reward conditions, *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, Vol. 1, p. 27–41.
2. Vézina, M., R. Bourbonnais, C. Brisson, L. Trudel, (2006). *Définir les risques : sur la prévention des problèmes de santé mentale*. Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales, Vol. 3(163), p. 32-38.
3. Brun, J.-P. (2012). *La reconnaissance au travail : de la gratitude à l'intégration*. Revue Effectif, Vol. 15(1).