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## 1. Abstract

The objective of this study is to analyze job satisfaction, psychosocial factors and ergonomic factors perceived within a small and medium-sized Italian company. The purpose of analyzing these aspects of people's working life is given by the fact that it allows adequate feedback on the working conditions of employees, in such a way that it is possible, once the existence of a problem has been identified, apply the interventions to improve the internal company of reference. The identified factors were analyzed within the company through the administration of three different questionnaires that were to separately investigate the various factors indicated (job satisfaction, psychosocial factors, ergonomic factors). The administration was carried out to the employees of the company that are divided into a total of 26 subjects. These subjects were identified within four different categories, which identified the four different types of tasks performed within the company: rest of the staff, foreman, collaborator, salesperson.

The surveys carried out showed that, for each of the different questionnaires to which the employees were submitted, two categories emerged with high scores: the category of foremen, which reported the highest scores in the questionnaires on job satisfaction and ergonomic factors, and the category of employees who reported higher scores on the psychosocial factors questionnaire. Based on these results, it is possible to observe that, within the chosen company, the category that perceives its working conditions as the most adequate is that of foremen. And this is consistent with what Hoppock highlighted in 1935 as a result of his studies on the different levels of job satisfaction according to the hierarchical level in which the employees were located.

**Keywords:** psychological well-being; ergonomic well-being; work satisfaction; psychosocial factors.

## 1. Resumen

El objetivo de este estudio es analizar la satisfacción laboral, los factores psicosociales y los factores ergonómicos percibidos dentro de una pequeña y mediana empresa italiana. El propósito de analizar estos aspectos de la vida laboral de las personas viene dado por el hecho de que permite tener una adecuada retroalimentación sobre las condiciones de trabajo de los empleados, de tal manera que sea posible, una vez identificada la existencia de algún problema, aplicar las intervenciones a mejorar la empresa interna de referencia. Los factores identificados fueron analizados dentro de la empresa a través de la administración de tres cuestionarios diferentes que fueron a investigar por separado los diversos factores señalados (satisfacción laboral, factores psicosociales, factores ergonómicos). La administración se realizó a los empleados de la empresa que se dividen en un total de 26 sujetos. Estos sujetos fueron identificados dentro de cuatro categorías diferentes, que identificaron los cuatro tipos diferentes de tareas realizadas dentro de la empresa: resto del personal, capataz, colaborador, vendedor.

Las encuestas realizadas mostraron que, para cada uno de los diferentes cuestionarios a los que se sometió a los empleados, surgieron dos categorías con puntajes altos: la categoría de capataces, que reportó los puntajes más altos en los cuestionarios sobre satisfacción laboral y factores ergonómicos, y la categoría de empleados que informaron puntajes más altos en el cuestionario de factores psicosociales. A partir de estos resultados es posible observar que, dentro de la empresa elegida, la categoría que percibe sus condiciones de trabajo como más adecuadas es la de capataces. Y esto es coherente con lo que Hoppock destacaba en 1935 a raíz de sus estudios sobre los distintos niveles de satisfacción laboral según el nivel jerárquico en el que se ubicaban los empleados.

**Palabras clave:** bienestar psicológico; bienestar ergonómico; satisfacción laboral; factores psicosociales.

## **2. Introduction**

### **2.1 What is job satisfaction?**

When we talk about job satisfaction we cannot give a single definition. As the different authors who have studied it throughout history have looked at the same construct with different eyes, focusing on different aspects, and seeing different things, all looking at the same thing.

A first definition that we can provide defines job satisfaction as that positive response to the occupation itself, which arises from the difference between the results that are expected to be obtained and those that have already been achieved. Locke defines it as: "A pleasant emotional state resulting from the evaluation that one's work facilitates or enables one to achieve one's work values."

Job satisfaction is influenced by several factors, which can be divided into:

- individual factors, which include all those factors inherent to the individual, age, gender, levels of self-esteem, IQ, etc;
- environmental or extractive factors, which are related to aspects of the organizational environment in which the subject finds himself (working conditions, types of work, autonomy, relationships with peers or superiors, etc.).

Hoppock, differing from Locke, defined job satisfaction as any combination of psychological, physiological, and environmental circumstances that lead a person to honestly say that he or she is satisfied with his or her job (Hoppock, 1935). According to this author, although job satisfaction is influenced by several external factors, it is still something internal. There remains, then, something that has to do above all and above all with the worker himself.

The term job satisfaction refers to the attitude and feelings that people have about their job. Positive and favorable attitudes towards work indicate job satisfaction. Negative and unfavorable attitudes toward work indicate job dissatisfaction (Armstrong, 2006).

One of the most cited definitions of job satisfaction is provided by Spector, according to which satisfaction has to do with how people feel about their work and its various aspects. It has to do with the extent to which people and people dislike their work. In fact, job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction can appear in any work situation.

### **2.2 Definition of psychosocial factors**

The theoretical concept of psychosocial factors has been defined as "those conditions present in work situations, related to the organization, content and performance of work, so that all these factors can influence both well-being and health (physical, emotional or social) of workers, and job development" (Locke, 1969).

Despite the slight variations that different authors may have made over time, this definition reported here is the most used for the representation of psychosocial factors.

This has a strong impact on the health of the individual within the organization, particularly when it comes to an inadequate psychosocial situation, the repercussions on the individual can affect different levels of the individual's health; On a physical level, it is possible that there may be discomfort such as headache or stomach pain, even more serious pathologies, such as cardiovascular diseases; at the psychological level there are changes in behavior or cognitive abilities; or on the emotional level where excessive levels of stress can be found.

Despite the different studies that may have different approaches, a factor common to all is the mutual relationship established between the work context and the person who is part of it.

Just as these two factors are related, so are the harmful consequences, reflected, on the part of the organization, in an increase in cases of absenteeism or labor conflicts, for example.

On the other hand, it is necessary to specify that the interaction between the work and the person can also be positive. This happens especially when the person has the opportunity to develop her skills and grow within the organization to which he belongs.

### **2.3 Why did we decide to do this type of study?**

The analysis of psychosocial factors, and their relationship with job satisfaction and the ergonomic factors that are analyzed in this study, allows us to know the perception of employees about the dynamics present in their workplace. And when this level of knowledge is acquired, it is possible to act preventively on those aspects that may cause conflicts and inconveniences in the future.

Knowledge is power, and in today's market, where any information can be useful for better performance, knowledge about how employees perceive their workplace and the way they work becomes essential.

These are the reasons that led us to analyze the job satisfaction of the Italian company we examined, which for privacy reasons we will call "Company X" which reflects the structure of many of the medium-sized organizations in Italy, so analyzing job satisfaction of their employees could give a rough and average idea of Italian job satisfaction.

### **2.4 Objectives that we intend to achieve with this research**

With this research, we set out first of all the objective of evaluating the psychosocial factors that a small-medium company has. We also try to investigate whether the psychosocial factors perceived by the employees of Company X are influenced by the type of work they do within the company, and by the type of physical work they do.

In fact, as we will delve into later, the questionnaires to which they were submitted focus on the different characteristics of psychosocial factors, with the aim of providing us with as broad a spectrum of information as possible; in such a way that the correlations that indicate if and where it was necessary to make changes in the way of managing human resources within the company can be identified.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1 Intervention design**

This study aims to study the psychosocial factors, job satisfaction and ergonomic factors of Company X in order to detect critical points or strengths within the management of the company.

Each of these factors will be analyzed through the administration of specific questionnaires, which will be deepened and adequately described below.

#### **3.2 Description of the sample and Procedure**

The analysis will be carried out on a sample of 26 subjects, belonging to a small and medium-sized Italian company, which will be divided into the categories highlighted by us:

- Rest of the staff, composed of 3 subjects;
- Foreman, composed of 3 subjects;
- Collaborator, composed of 4 subjects;
- Seller, composed of 16 subjects.

The company in question is dedicated to the trade of equipment and technical clothing in the sports field. The activity it develops consists of the purchase of technical sports clothing that covers different types of sports, such as tennis, swimming, running, etc., from the manufacturers of these products, with the aim of reselling them both to private buyers and to sports associations. of the area in which you work. Company X always seeks excellence in its products, giving particular priority to quality and comfort, preferring these characteristics to the economy of the product, or its ease of availability. In addition to dealing with the sale of technical clothing, it also deals with the sale of the equipment necessary to carry out different types of sports. Specifically, it sells material such as tennis rackets, paddle tennis rackets, weights, sup, etc. In order that anyone can have quality equipment that allows them to practice the chosen sport in the best possible way.

Company X has three small to medium sized branches, two of which are located in the same city and the third office is located in one of the adjacent provinces. All three offices are located within the same region.

The questionnaires to which the employees of this company were submitted did not have internal sociodemographic questions due to the size of the company. The only item in this category that was placed asks the participants to identify the position they hold within the company.

Other items of a sociodemographic nature were not included due to the small size of the company; in fact, if other questions had been added, the subjects would have been too easily identifiable, distorting the veracity of the answers given.

Questionnaires were administered. anonymously through Google Forms, without collecting the participant's mail, so that the acquisition times of the subjects' responses could be speeded up.

And the duration of the administration before obtaining the answers of the used sample, occurred approximately in a week.

### 3.3. Variables and questionnaires

#### 3.3.1 Psychosocial Factors Questionnaire

The questionnaire on psychosocial factors is the one currently used by the National Institute of Safety and Hygiene at Work (INSHT), divided into 44 closed items. The questionnaire has a high internal reliability and a high correlation with the subscales of the job satisfaction test and, to a lesser extent, with the General Health questionnaire (Ferrer & Peró, 2011).

This questionnaire deals with the analysis of nine psychosocial factors that are:

- Work Time (TT): factor that refers to the different aspects that focus on the temporal structuring of the subject's work.
- Autonomy (AU): refers to the individual capacity and possibility of the worker to manage and make decisions about the temporal and organizational structure of their work.
- Workload (CT): refers to the degree of mobilization required of the worker to carry out his task.
- Demandas psicológicas (DP): se refiere a la naturaleza de las demandas que se deben cumplir en el lugar de trabajo, las cuales pueden ser de carácter cognitivo o emocional.
- Variety/content (VC): includes the feeling that the work has meaning and utility in itself.
- Participation/supervision (PS): focuses on the degree of control the worker has over his work, analyzing the participation and supervision to which he is subjected.
- Interest in the worker / compensation (ITC): refers to the degree of concern that the company shows towards the worker.
- Role performance (DE): this factor considers the problems that may arise from the definition of the tasks of each position.
- Relationships and social support (RAS): refers to those aspects of working conditions that derive from the relationships established between the subject and their environment.

#### 3.3.2. Job satisfaction questionnaire

To investigate the job satisfaction of the employees of Company X, the Job Satisfaction Questionnaire S20/23 J.L. Melia and J.M. Peiro (1998).

The items of this questionnaire are divided into 23 questions, whose answers are those of a 7-point Likert-type scale. The score for each item on the questionnaire ranges from 1, which means "Very Dissatisfied", to a maximum of 7, which represents "Very Satisfied". The midpoint is represented by the point 4, which represents "Indifferent".

This questionnaire, through the questions posed, analyzes several factors:

- Satisfaction with Supervision: characterized by satisfaction with the supervision received, the degree of help from superiors and personal relationships with them.



- Satisfaction with the Physical Environment: which refers to the satisfaction perceived by the subject towards the physical characteristics (hygiene, health, lighting) of the environment in which they work.
- Satisfaction with Benefits: which refers to the degree to which the organization respects the agreement, the salary granted and the promotion opportunities for employees.
- Intrinsic Satisfaction: refers to the satisfaction that the work itself provides to the subject.
- Satisfaction with Participation: which refers to the satisfaction derived from participation in group decisions, or from the work area itself.

### 3.3.3. Ergonomic and psychosocial perception questionnaire

This last questionnaire has been developed ad hoc for this work from a data collection questionnaire of the Govern de les Illes Balears. It is divided into 13 items with dichotomous answers. For each item of the questionnaire, the subject can only answer yes or no, and it is proposed, through its 13 questions, to investigate the ergonomic and psychosocial perception that the subject has of his job.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Results of the psychosocial factors questionnaire

The psychosocial factors shown in figure 1 are the data derived from the analysis of the questionnaires carried out by the subjects belonging to the entire company, with no differences between the jobs. All reported data were analyzed using the F-Psico software, which was specially structured to analyze the data derived from this questionnaire.

Several tables have been created, within the data analysis, that report the general conditions of the company, for each factor that makes up the questionnaire. In this table, the responses of the subjects will be grouped through different colors that indicate the perception by the employees of Company X, ranging from a green color, which indicates well-being, to a red color, which indicates a situation of danger to employees. As can be seen in this table, there are several areas in which the company's management has a positive impact on the employees' perception of the psychosocial factors analysed. In particular, these areas consist of:

- Variety/content (VC): in which more than 80% of the employees are in a suitable situation.
- Autonomía (AU): en este ámbito casi el 60% de los empleados reportan una situación adecuada.
- Interest for the worker / compensation (ITC): as in the previous factor, here too almost 60% of the workforce reports an adequate situation.

We have some factors where the proper condition of the employees is about half of the staff, such as the CT, DP, DR and RAS. These factors are around 50%, going from a minimum of

40% reported by the coach, to a maximum of 52% of well-being, reported in the PD and RAS factors.

There are two factors in particular that report a low level of well-being reported by employees: Working Time (TT), in which only 16% of employees report an adequate situation, and Participation/Supervision (PS) in the that only 24% of employees report an adequate situation. proper situation.

Although both factors indicate an uncomfortable situation for the employees of Company X, there is a difference between these two. In fact, TT has a lower percentage of "high risk" employees than the employees reported by the PS factor. For these reasons, when deciding what to focus on at the time of the intervention, it is good that the focus is mainly on the PS factor.

Figure 1. Analysis of the company's total data (psychosocial questionnaire)

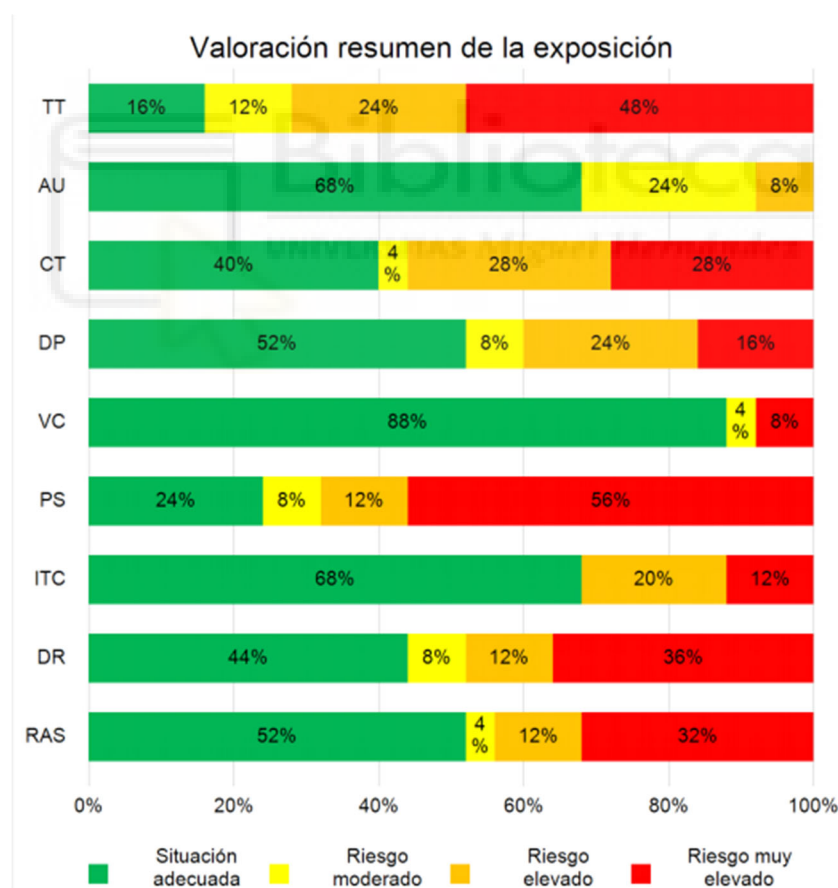


Figure 2. Data analysis for each group



Figure 2 shows a comparison of the answers given by the employees analyzed for each group analyzed in this work. It is possible to observe how the categories that have an adequate perception of the psychosocial factors of their workplace are salespeople and collaborators. The other two categories, that of the foreman and that of the rest of the workforce, respectively report six and five factors in which there is a very high risk for workers in these categories. Comparing these data with those that emerged from the general analysis, they coincide with what was found. In fact, in almost all categories there is a large percentage of workers who perceive high-risk working conditions in the factors found in the general analysis of Company X: working time and PS.

From what emerges from the data shown in figure two, when it is necessary to plan an intervention on these categories, it is preferable to intervene in particular on the capacity and the rest of the workforce, analyzing together with these data those that emerged from the other questionnaires. reported below.

#### 4.2 Results of the job satisfaction questionnaire

The following table analyzes the data reported by each category of workers identified within the company in the five factors that make up the job satisfaction questionnaire to which they were submitted. The data in this table refer to the arithmetic averages that each of the following categories, and the total company, reported for the indicated factors.

Table 2. Analysis of job satisfaction for each position and for the entire company

	<b>Satisfaction with Supervision</b>	<b>Satisfaction with the Physical Environment</b>	<b>Satisfaction with Benefits</b>	<b>Intrinsic Satisfaction</b>	<b>Satisfaction with Participation</b>
Rest of the staff	3,33	4	3,17	3,75	3,78
Foreman	5,17	5,4	5,17	4,42	5,89
Collaborator	4,71	3,9	4,25	4,13	4,67
Seller	4,95	4,91	4,73	4,91	4,52
Total	4,75	4,79	4,44	4,60	4,62

As was done previously for the questionnaire that analyzes psychosocial factors, the data derived from the questionnaire that analyzes job satisfaction will also be presented first for the general

characteristics of the entire company, related to the five factors that characterize this questionnaire, and the individual categories. related to the five factors will be examined below.

The numerical data shown in this table is derived from the arithmetic mean of the subjects for each factor, identified below for each category identified. This table shows how the average number of responses from employees throughout the company is around 4.5, which indicates average job satisfaction.

After analyzing the five factors for each of the jobs identified, it is possible to notice a difference between job satisfaction between the different types of employment. The lowest job satisfaction is found in the "rest of the workforce" category, in fact the average score of the five factors, within this category, is around 3.5, indicating medium-low job satisfaction.

The position that, on the contrary, reaches higher job satisfaction scores, is that of "foreman". The average score of the five factors for this group of employees is close to 6, indicating a fairly high level of job satisfaction.

The other two types of tasks identified, collaborators and suppliers, reported responses that indicate job satisfaction, in these employees, of a medium-high nature. In fact, for both categories, 4 is exceeded in almost all the factors identified, and in particular in the case of sellers, there is an average of responses close to 5.

#### 4.3 Description of the questionnaire on ergonomic factors

This table will show the data derived from the last questionnaire to which the employees of Company X were submitted: the questionnaire on ergonomic factors. This last questionnaire, unlike the other two previously exposed, had a different data analysis. In fact, since these were dichotomous answers, each item was answered with "Yes" or "No", it was not possible to average the answers given by the subjects. For these reasons, this table shows the number of positive or negative responses for the entire company and for each category of functions identified.

Table 3. Analysis of ergonomic factors for each job and for the entire company

	No	Yes	Total
Rest of the staff	48,6%	51,4%	37
Collaborator	68,0%	32,0%	47
Foreman	40,5%	59,5%	37
Seller	47,1%	52,9%	191
Total	155	157	

The questionnaire on ergonomic factors included in this study is structured in such a way that it dominates and investigates the care of ergonomics of employees during the performance of their

work. At the moment if you ask the percentage of positive or negative response to this article, if you analyze how much, secondly and independently, the workshop deals with the ergonomic care of its laboratory.

It is possible to observe, both through the total number of responses and through the percentages recorded for each position, that there is an approximate balance between the number of positive responses and the number of negative responses from employees. Thus determining how much the company does not pay special attention to ergonomic factors, but at the same time the general working conditions are not harmful to people.

When analyzing the specific percentages of each identified category, it is possible to notice that half of the categories respect this approximate balance. The only two tasks in which there is more than a slight difference in favor of negative or positive responses are the tasks of collaborator and foreman. In the first case, it is possible to notice that the category of collaborators reports a much higher percentage of negative responses than all the others: almost 70% of the employees belonging to this category report inadequate ergonomic conditions. These data must be taken into account when evaluating a possible intervention on the ergonomic factors of the company; in fact, excessively negative ergonomic conditions could cause physical and psychological harm to employees.

In the group of foremen, on the other hand, the imbalance reported by the responses given is in favor of positive responses. In fact, as can be seen in the table, the percentage of positive answers given in this category reaches almost 60%. Highlighting how, within this category, ergonomic conditions are more attentive, which can result in greater well-being in the workplace, which could result in improved effectiveness and efficiency.

In this case, we can assume that this may be one of the factors that contribute to job satisfaction, since the category of foremen is the one that reported the highest score in the job satisfaction questionnaire.

## **5. Discussion**

The data that emerged from the questionnaires administered to the employees of Company X, show a reality with some positive and adequately addressed aspects, while highlighting others that are more or less improvable.

The working conditions analyzed in these three questionnaires refer to three of the macro-areas that contribute to the well-being of the worker. When all three have been analysed, it is possible to accurately describe the conditions of working life, identifying in what aspects and to what extent it is necessary to intervene.

In the present work, based on the data obtained, it was discovered that the first aspect on which it is necessary to intervene is Participation/Supervision. In fact, given the responses, far too many employees have been identified as being at risk in this particular area.

## 5.1 Interpretation of results

From the results that emerged from the questionnaires that the employees of Company X have heard, it is possible to get a more or less clear idea of the working conditions that currently exist within the company.

In the first place, it is possible to point out that the category of foremen is the category of people that seems to be, from different points of view, the one with the best working conditions. Indeed, from the questionnaires on job satisfaction and on ergonomic factors it can be deduced that, in the first questionnaire, they have the highest scores in almost all the factors that make up job satisfaction; while regarding the questionnaire on ergonomic factors, it is in this category that the greatest difference between positive and negative responses can be noted, in favor of the positive ones.

But although the foremen category was the one that reported the highest scores in the job satisfaction and ergonomic factors questionnaires, it was the category that reported the highest number of very high risk factors in the socioeconomic factors questionnaire. It would be good to investigate further, possibly through interviews commissioned to an external consultant, what causes this dualism about the perception of work within Company X.

But if foremen are among the people who have better working conditions, there are other categories where conditions change. The category of collaborators, for example, is the category that reports the lowest score in satisfaction with the physical environment, and it is always the category that, in the questionnaire on ergonomic factors, reports the highest number of negative responses among all the others.

But as reported by the previous category, there is also a dualism here, since it is the category that reports the largest number of factors with adequate perception by its employees, in the questionnaire on psychosocial factors.

The responses reported by the other categories indicate an average trend, but there is room for improvement in terms of job satisfaction, ergonomic factors and psychosocial factors. Areas where there are criticalities indicate rather impotent criticalities, to which the company's management must pay attention. In fact, improving work times and participation would improve internal and external working conditions, which would also improve work motivation (Herzberg, 1959). Motivation, defined as the inner impulse that leads the individual to apply himself with commitment at work (Riello, 2018), is capable of increasing effectiveness and efficiency at work. Therefore, it is in the interest of both managers and employees themselves to work to create better working conditions; on the one hand for an increase in sales and profits, on the other to be able to have working conditions that protect the mental and physical health of the workers.

## 5.2 Area of intervention

In order to intervene and improve the aspects that have been found to be less adequate through this survey, it is necessary to create a form in which the data obtained is presented so that the risks can be identified, both in quantitative and qualitative terms.

Once this is done, it will be necessary to identify which intervention methods may be suitable and convenient for Company X, since the characteristics of each company allow the application of some methods instead of others. In addition, for the intervention process to be defined as effective, at least one of the internal members of Company X must actively participate in the process, since it could indicate which methods are the most suitable for their business. But if it were possible, it would be even better for a large part of the workers to take an active part in this process, since participation favors acceptance and commitment, lowering the level of resistance that an external intervention could provoke.

Once this is done, there are three possible strategies that can be adopted to intervene on the criticalities detected:

- prevention at the source: this strategy aims to reduce the magnitude of the risk, or the duration of exposure to the risk by the subjects;
- improvement of resistance: without investigating the origins of the problem, the intervention aims to improve the resistance of employees towards the problem;
- therapeutic strategy: it is aimed at addressing, through medical or psychological intervention, the discomforts derived from a working life carried out with undue psychosocial factors.

The choice of which strategy to choose is based both on the nature of the problems that are identified within the company, and on the very nature of the company that is going to be reversed.

In the case of Company X, given the size of the company itself, and the level of specialization that its employees must have to identify and sell the correct products, it is probably more productive to use the prevention at source strategy. Predicting the problems that have been identified, such as the very high risk in Working Time, is more difficult to repeat over time, and analyzing the causes would allow a greater understanding of the internal dynamics so that the signs of discomfort. caught earlier by the workers.

The same strategy, and the resulting advantages, apply to almost every problem identified within Company X; the low job satisfaction of the "Rest of the staff", the high number of negative responses to the ergonomic questionnaire in the "Collaborator" category. All these problems, when the causes are identified and a participatory process of the employees for their improvement is initiated, would allow growth both in the values identified as improvement, as well as in the level of motivation and belonging that the employees feel within their place of work.



## 6. Conclusion

This work had set itself the objective of analyzing the conditions of the work environment of a small and medium-sized Italian company. And so it was done, in the times and in the ways that have been reported in this work.

The focus of this analysis on psychosocial factors, job satisfaction, and ergonomic factors occurred for several reasons. The first is due to the fact that these areas are the areas of the working life of the subjects that most influence their well-being, performance and performance. Psychosocial factors, in particular, provide a wide spectrum of information on the different aspects that characterize the lives of workers; aspects that are analyzed within the nine factors that characterize the questionnaire administered to the participants of this study.

The second reason is given by the type of work carried out by Company X. In fact, given its work in the sale of technical products in the sports field, ergonomic factors have been taken into account, since the tasks of disposing of the merchandise and exposure to customers can generate physical conditions in employees that can cause discomfort and damage, both to the workers themselves and to the company.

The results that emerged from these questionnaires show a reality that is adequate on average for the workers that comprise it. A type of reality in which it is possible to make changes to improve the well-being of workers, but in any case a type of reality that could be an example for the sector in which it works, and for many others that are configured in similar way.

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