

Soft Skills Development as a Strategy to Reduce Work Stress in Small Enterprises: A Human-Centered Intervention Approach

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Abstract

Work-related stress represents a growing challenge for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly in organizational contexts where leadership practices, communication processes, and teamwork dynamics are limited or poorly structured. From a human-centered and organizational development perspective, this study explores the role of soft skills development as a strategy to reduce perceived work stress among employees in small enterprises.

The research adopts a quantitative, applied design with an intervention-oriented approach. Data are collected using standardized instruments that assess leadership styles, communication, teamwork, and levels of work-related stress among employees in two small enterprises. Based on the diagnostic phase, a soft skills development intervention is designed, focusing on humanistic leadership, effective communication, and collaborative work practices.

This paper presents the research design, methodological framework, and preliminary findings from the diagnostic stage, highlighting existing gaps in soft skills development and their relationship with work stress indicators. The study aims to contribute to the field of human resource management by proposing an applied intervention model that integrates human-centered principles into talent development strategies, particularly within small organizational contexts.

The expected contributions include practical implications for human resource management practices, emphasizing soft skills as a preventive strategy against work-related stress and as a pathway to promote healthier and more sustainable work environments in SMEs.

Keywords: Soft skills; Work stress; Human resource management; Leadership; Small enterprises