

FACTORS IN THE FORMATION OF STRESS SYNDROME AMONG EMPLOYEES IN REMOTE WORK CONDITIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR ITS REDUCTION

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of remote work has transformed the organization of labor, communication, and professional responsibility in contemporary society. While this format offers flexibility, autonomy, and access to broader employment opportunities, it also creates new psychological pressures for employees. In remote work conditions, stress syndrome is formed not only under the influence of workload, but also through social isolation, blurred boundaries between work and personal life, digital fatigue, role ambiguity, reduced emotional support, and constant online availability. This article analyzes the main factors contributing to the formation of stress syndrome among employees working remotely and examines practical strategies for reducing its negative effects. The paper argues that stress in remote work should be understood as a complex psycho-social process shaped by organizational culture, leadership style, technological



environment, and individual coping resources. Special attention is given to preventive approaches such as structured communication, workload regulation, emotional support systems, psychological resilience training, digital hygiene, and the development of a healthy work-life balance. The article concludes that the reduction of stress syndrome in remote employment requires an integrated strategy combining institutional responsibility and personal self-regulation.

Keywords: Remote work, stress syndrome, employee well-being, digital fatigue, work-life balance, occupational stress, psychological adaptation, organizational support, emotional burnout, stress reduction strategies.

Introduction

The transformation of labor relations in the digital era has made remote work one of the most visible features of modern employment. Previously considered a flexible or occasional form of labor, remote work has gradually become a stable model for many organizations, especially in education, information technologies, consulting, administration, media, and service sectors. This shift has changed not only the physical place of work but also the psychological structure of professional activity. In a traditional workplace, employees usually function within clear temporal, spatial, and social boundaries. In remote work conditions, these boundaries become unstable, and this instability often creates a fertile environment for chronic stress formation. Therefore, the issue of stress syndrome among remote employees has become an important scientific and practical problem requiring deep analysis [1,2].

Stress syndrome in remote work cannot be reduced to temporary emotional tension or simple fatigue. It is a multi-layered condition that develops through repeated exposure to psycho-emotional pressure, informational overload, uncertainty, and lack of recovery. In many cases, remote employees begin with a positive perception of distance work because it eliminates commuting time, provides autonomy, and allows greater control over daily routines. However, over time, this same flexibility may turn into hidden overload. The absence of visible supervision often leads to self-imposed pressure, prolonged working hours, and an internal fear of seeming unproductive. Employees may work beyond formal schedules, answer messages late at night, or continue tasks without sufficient rest,



believing that digital visibility has become the new indicator of responsibility [3,18]. One of the central factors in the formation of stress syndrome in remote work conditions is the blurring of boundaries between professional and personal life. In office-based work, the transition between work and home has symbolic and practical markers: commuting, office schedules, workspace separation, and face-to-face routines. Remote work removes many of these markers. As a result, employees often experience a psychological spillover of work demands into family life, rest time, and even sleep patterns. When work is constantly present in the home environment, the individual may lose the ability to detach mentally from professional obligations. This persistent cognitive attachment to work becomes a source of continuous tension and gradually increases emotional exhaustion [4,27].

Another major factor is social isolation. Human labor is not purely technical; it is deeply relational. In the traditional work environment, colleagues provide emotional validation, informal conversation, immediate feedback, and a sense of belonging. Remote work reduces spontaneous social contact and may replace meaningful interaction with short digital exchanges. Over time, this weakens interpersonal trust, decreases emotional connectedness, and can create a silent form of loneliness. Even highly competent employees may feel psychologically unsupported when they face challenges alone in front of a screen. The lack of shared emotional space can intensify anxiety, reduce motivation, and weaken resilience to stress [5,31].

Digital fatigue is also a powerful contributor to stress syndrome in remote employment. Remote work depends on continuous interaction with screens, online meetings, written messages, project management platforms, and notification systems. The employee is required to process large amounts of fragmented information in rapid sequence. Unlike many in-person interactions, digital communication demands greater conscious attention to verbal cues, written tone, timing, and technical clarity. Long video meetings, frequent switching between platforms, and constant message alerts exhaust attentional resources. This form of fatigue is not only physical but also cognitive and emotional. It lowers concentration, increases irritability, and creates a background state of mental overload that supports the development of chronic stress [6,14]. Role ambiguity and communication uncertainty also play a crucial role. In remote settings, tasks may be transmitted through brief texts, fragmented instructions, or



delayed feedback. Employees may not fully understand expectations, deadlines, quality standards, or priorities. When communication lacks clarity, workers are forced to interpret intentions on their own, which increases cognitive strain. Unclear roles create insecurity: the employee may wonder whether enough has been done, whether the task has been understood correctly, or whether the manager is dissatisfied. Such ambiguity contributes to anticipatory anxiety, especially among conscientious individuals who seek high performance and social approval [7,20].

A further stress-producing factor is the culture of permanent availability. Many remote employees feel pressure to respond immediately to messages, emails, calls, and online requests. This expectation may not always be formally stated, but it often develops informally within organizations. The worker begins to equate availability with commitment and speed with competence. As a result, rest becomes interrupted, concentration becomes fragmented, and the nervous system remains in a state of readiness. This condition is psychologically expensive because true recovery requires moments of non-engagement. When the employee is never fully “off,” the body and mind remain in a prolonged activation state, which contributes to irritability, sleep problems, and emotional depletion [8,25]. Home environment conditions should also be considered. Remote work takes place within highly unequal domestic contexts. Some employees have quiet rooms, ergonomic furniture, and supportive family arrangements; others work in crowded homes, noisy environments, or under household care obligations. The remote model often hides these inequalities because all employees appear equally present on a screen. Yet the real psychological burden varies significantly. Parents of young children, caregivers of elderly relatives, and those living in restricted spaces often experience role conflict. They must simultaneously manage professional and domestic demands, leading to divided attention, guilt, and chronic frustration. Under such conditions, stress does not come only from work itself but from the collision of incompatible responsibilities [9,29].

Personality characteristics and coping styles influence how stress syndrome forms and intensifies. Employees with perfectionistic tendencies, high self-criticism, strong achievement orientation, or difficulty setting boundaries are especially vulnerable in remote environments. Since digital work often lacks natural stopping points, these individuals may overinvest energy, revise tasks excessively, or remain mentally occupied with work after hours. Similarly,



employees with low tolerance for uncertainty may suffer more when communication is delayed or organizational processes are unclear. This means that stress in remote work is not merely an external problem; it is produced through interaction between external demands and internal psychological patterns [10,24].

Leadership style and organizational culture substantially shape employee stress levels. In remote work settings, leadership that relies on excessive monitoring, distrust, and constant checking tends to increase stress. Micromanagement in digital form may appear through repeated status requests, unnecessary reporting, surveillance tools, and implicit suspicion. Such practices undermine autonomy and create a climate of psychological pressure. By contrast, supportive leadership based on trust, clear expectations, and humane communication can reduce stress even under high workload conditions. Employees are more resilient when they feel respected, informed, and emotionally recognized. Thus, organizational behavior is not a background factor but one of the strongest determinants of remote stress experience.

The formation of stress syndrome in remote work may be understood in several stages. In the initial stage, the employee experiences adaptation tension. This includes adjusting to technology, time structuring, online collaboration, and new expectations. In the second stage, repeated exposure to unresolved pressures leads to cumulative fatigue. The employee begins to feel mentally tired, emotionally flat, or physically strained. In the third stage, stress becomes more stable and starts affecting behavior, motivation, and cognition. Productivity may decrease, emotional reactions may intensify, and communication may become more defensive or avoidant. In the final stage, if no intervention occurs, chronic stress may shift toward emotional burnout, psychosomatic complaints, disengagement, and a decline in overall well-being.

The symptoms of stress syndrome in remote workers often appear in subtle ways. Cognitive symptoms include difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, indecision, and reduced creativity. Emotional symptoms may involve irritability, inner tension, helplessness, apathy, and loss of satisfaction in work. Behavioral signs include withdrawal from communication, procrastination, impulsive responses, overchecking messages, or extending work into late hours. Physiological indicators may include headaches, visual fatigue, sleep disturbances, muscle tension, and general exhaustion. Because remote work hides many external signs



of struggle, these symptoms are not always noticed early by managers or colleagues. For this reason, stress in remote work is often underdiagnosed until it begins affecting performance or health more seriously.

The reduction of stress syndrome in remote conditions requires a comprehensive strategy rather than isolated recommendations. First, organizations must create clear and realistic work structures. Employees need transparent expectations regarding tasks, priorities, response times, meeting schedules, and performance criteria. Clarity reduces uncertainty, and reduced uncertainty lowers unnecessary psychological tension. A well-structured workflow also protects workers from the hidden chaos that often accompanies digital labor. It is not enough to assign tasks; organizations should also define communication norms and boundaries, including when employees are not expected to be online. Second, workload regulation is essential. In many remote contexts, work expands silently because digital systems allow tasks to flow continuously. Managers should periodically assess not only output but also the sustainability of workload. This means reviewing deadlines, meeting frequency, and the real cognitive burden associated with multitasking. Employees should be encouraged to focus on meaningful priorities rather than endless responsiveness. A reduction strategy becomes effective when institutions recognize that overextension is not a sign of productivity but a risk factor for long-term inefficiency and psychological deterioration.

Third, emotional support systems should be strengthened. Remote workers need more than technical instructions; they need a sense that their psychological condition matters. Regular check-ins that include emotional well-being, peer support circles, mentoring arrangements, and access to counseling services can reduce feelings of isolation and normalize help-seeking behavior. Informal communication spaces are also important. Virtual environments should not consist only of task discussions. Opportunities for human conversation, recognition, and social bonding help maintain group cohesion and provide emotional buffering against stress. Fourth, the development of digital hygiene is one of the most practical strategies for stress reduction. Digital hygiene refers to intentional habits that protect attention, recovery, and cognitive health in online environments. These include limiting notifications, scheduling meeting-free periods, avoiding multitasking during calls, taking screen breaks, and establishing clear start-and-end rituals for the workday. Employees who develop healthy digital routines are better able to preserve concentration and reduce mental



fragmentation. Organizations should not leave these habits entirely to personal choice; they should actively promote a culture in which healthy digital behavior is respected and modeled [3,28]. Fifth, strengthening personal stress-management skills is necessary. While organizational reform is fundamental, individual coping resources also matter. Employees benefit from training in self-regulation, time management, emotional awareness, relaxation methods, and adaptive coping strategies. [10,31]. Practices such as reflective journaling, breathing exercises, physical movement, short recovery pauses, and realistic self-monitoring can help individuals regulate stress before it becomes chronic. However, it is important not to individualize the problem excessively. Personal coping strategies are most effective when they function within a supportive organizational framework rather than as substitutes for systemic improvement [5,15].

Sixth, work-life balance should be treated as a structural principle, not a private luxury. In remote work, balance does not emerge automatically from flexibility. It must be intentionally built through boundary-setting. Employees should have defined working hours, separate workspaces where possible, and routines that mark the transition from professional to personal time. Families should also be included indirectly in this balance process through realistic scheduling and respect for domestic roles. When the employee can mentally leave work at the end of the day, recovery becomes possible. Without recovery, stress accumulates even if the individual appears outwardly functional [6,22].

Seventh, leadership training is necessary for stress prevention in remote organizations. Managers need competencies not only in coordination but also in psychological sensitivity. A remote leader should know how to communicate clearly, recognize signs of overload, provide supportive feedback, and avoid digital micromanagement. Trust-based leadership encourages autonomy while still maintaining accountability. Employees are less stressed when they feel that evaluation is fair, communication is respectful, and difficulties can be discussed without fear. Thus, leadership style may either intensify stress syndrome or serve as one of the strongest protective factors against it [7,18].

Eighth, organizations should promote a culture of psychological safety. In many remote settings, employees hide stress because they fear being judged as weak, undisciplined, or incapable. Psychological safety means that workers can speak openly about workload, fatigue, confusion, or emotional strain without risking humiliation or punishment. This atmosphere supports earlier intervention and



more honest communication. It also improves problem-solving because people can raise concerns before they become crises. In the absence of psychological safety, stress becomes internalized and more difficult to address [8,27]. From a broader scientific perspective, the stress syndrome of remote workers reflects a deeper contradiction in modern labor systems. Technology has increased flexibility but also intensified invisible demands. The employee may appear physically safer and more autonomous, yet psychologically more exposed to isolation, overconnection, and self-exploitation. This paradox shows that remote work is not inherently harmful or beneficial. Its psychological impact depends on how work is designed, managed, and lived. When remote labor is organized around trust, clarity, rhythm, and support, it may improve well-being. When it is driven by permanent responsiveness, ambiguity, and digital overload, it becomes a strong source of stress [9].

In conclusion, the formation of stress syndrome among employees in remote work conditions is shaped by a complex interaction of organizational, technological, social, and personal factors. The most important among them are blurred work-life boundaries, social isolation, digital fatigue, communication ambiguity, continuous availability, unequal home conditions, maladaptive coping styles, and unsupportive leadership. These factors do not act separately; they reinforce one another and create a psychological environment in which chronic stress can gradually develop. The reduction of this syndrome requires integrated strategies such as clear task structuring, sustainable workload distribution, emotional support mechanisms, digital hygiene, leadership development, personal stress-management skills, and a genuine culture of psychological safety. Remote work will remain an important part of the modern labor system, but its sustainability depends on how carefully the human dimension of work is protected. For this reason, the problem of stress syndrome in remote employment should be regarded not only as a health issue but also as a matter of organizational ethics, social responsibility, and long-term professional effectiveness.

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