



Employers' responsibility for maintaining the health of the employees in Ukraine: the results of empirical research

Responsabilidades de los empleadores para salvar la salud de los trabajadores en Ucrania: un estudio empírico

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ABSTRACT:

The results obtained through a sociological and content analysis showed that in Ukraine the employers' social responsibility for maintaining the health of the employees hasn't been developed. Managers of industrial enterprises consider the proMethodology to apply Lean in supply chain managementtection of health of the employees as social protection, lies the responsibility for health foremost with the employees themselves. Managers act formally within the framework of the legislation. Employers rarely use health improvement programs for the employees, economize on work safety, increase working hours and work intensity.

Keywords: social responsibility of the employers, health of the employees, working conditions.

RESUMEN:

Los resultados obtenidos a través de un análisis sociológico y de contenido mostraron que en Ucrania no se desarrolla la responsabilidad social de los empleadores para la protección de la salud de los empleados. Los ejecutivos de la industria creen que la salud de los empleados es protección social; La responsabilidad de la salud recae principalmente en los propios trabajadores. Los gerentes actúan formalmente en el marco de la legislación. Los empleadores rara vez usan programas de salud para empleados, ahorran en seguridad laboral, aumentan las horas de trabajo y la intensidad del trabajo.

Palabras clave: responsabilidad social de los empleadores, salud de los trabajadores, condiciones de trabajo.

1. Introduction

In Ukraine the problem of maintaining the health of the employees has become pressing against a background of growing rate of incidence, mortality and emergencies in some of its territories. Decrease in the level of economic activity of the population, drop in employment in basic sectors of the economy, increase in employment in the informal sector of the economy with mostly unskilled and low skilled labour force, increase in the level of hidden unemployment - all these processes have a negative impact on the health of the working population.

In terms of mortality Ukraine ranks the first in Europe and worldwide with a natural depopulation. The key role in the formation of low life expectancy in Ukraine is played by mortality rates of

Ukrainian men aged 30-59 years, which are 4-6 times higher than in European Union countries (Levchuk, 2015). One third of the population are dying before the age of 65 (the end of employment period). Every employee has almost 1.5 illnesses, one in four has diseases of the circulatory system, one in five has respiratory organs diseases, more than 1.2 million people have diseases related to mental and behavioral disorders (Nagorna, 2018).

Adverse health effects are caused by working conditions. In Ukraine about one-third of employees work in conditions that do not meet the sanitary and hygiene standards: in 2017 the amount of such employees constituted 838.6 thousand people (or 28.4% of the total number of the employees) (Umovy pratsi pratsivnykiv u 2017 rotsi, 2018, p.7). This causes injuries and occupational diseases, which has a negative impact not only on the employees but also on the society as a whole: there is a decrease in labour productivity and an increase in the burden on the social security system, the economy of the country as a whole.

In terms of death rates at work Ukraine is a leading country among all EU countries and has the worst performance even in comparison with the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (Fond sotsial'noho strakhuvannia Ukrainy, 2019). In total, from 2014 to 2017 the number of victims of industrial accidents constituted 18.2 thousand people, 1.4 thousand of whom died. (Travmatyzm na vyrobnytstvi v Ukraini u 2017 rotsi, 2018; p.9). There are more than 200 000 patients with occupational morbidity in the country. In 2015-2017 the number of disabled people, who were injured or had occupational disability, increased: from 1928 people in 2015 to 2365 people in 2017, despite the decrease in the number of people employed in the country (Sotsial'nyj zakhyst naselennia Ukrainy, 2016, p. .81; Sotsial'nyj zakhyst naselennia Ukrainy, 2018, p.82).

Experts have found that the economic losses of Ukraine as a result of occupational injuries and diseases constitute at least 60-70 billion UAH annually. (Tairova, 2016). These losses are caused by the termination of employment of a large number of employees through occupational diseases, disabilities or death at work. More than 300 000 people in the country are compensated for occupational injuries or diseases. About 1.14% of GDP is spent to eliminate the consequences of occupational diseases annually (Nagorna, 2018). For 9 months of 2019 the costs of the Social Security Fund for Temporary Disability amounted to over 7 billion UAH. (Fond sotsial'noho strakhuvannia Ukrainy, 2019). Costs of the enterprises caused by accidents in 2014-2017 amounted to more than 18 million UAH annually, including fines - more than 114 thousand UAH, and losses from property damages only (equipment, tools, destroyed buildings, structures) in 2017 amounted to 5 million UAH. (Travmatyzm na vyrobnytstvi v Ukraini u 2017 rotsi, 2018; p.28).

In the current circumstances the role of the employers in maintaining the health of employees is increasing. The justification of the need to involve business in ensuring the health of the employees was presented in the author's work (Ohanezova, 2016b).

In Ukraine employers' focus on the employees' health is considered from the perspective of creating safe working conditions (Articles 13 and 47 of the Law on Occupational Safety). However, there is no responsibility (material, criminal, administrative) for violation of the law. At the same time according to experts " Ukrainian employers take care of the rate of profit more than of the life and health of the employees" (Ukraincy soznatel'no riskujut zdorov'em, bojas' poterjat' rabotu – jekspert, 2013).

According to the scientific research the issues of health protection of the employees are considered from the perspective of implementation of the principles of decent work and personnel safety (Kolot (Ed.), 2015; Brintseva, 2015), social responsibility in the field of the occupational safety and health (Shevchuk, 2012; Tsyna, 2013; Filipenko , 2015), risk mitigation in employment relations (Hrishnova, Mischuk & Olijnyk, 2014), formation of health culture, corporate health (Rybakov, 2015; Konovalova, 2018), workplace health management programs (Health Cost Containment and Efficiencies, 2010), workspace ecology (Tsaryk, Chernychenko & Chernysh, 2013; Karpovich, Lepihina, 2017), occupational health (Chen, 2015), employers' social responsibility (Chubarova, 2011; Mit'kina, 2012; Mosejko, 2012; Zemljanuhina, 2018).

According to the author, the category of "social responsibility of the employers" is the broadest and most comprehensive concept. Taking into account the health of the employees and the role of the employers in this process in Ukraine this concept gives the opportunity to use the most effective mechanisms to improve the situation. Therefore, all of these approaches can be expressed through the concept of the employer social responsibility, which is an integral part of corporate social responsibility. It is based on human rights in the labor and related fields, recognized throughout the world and documented by UN, ILO, WHO. This type of social

responsibility is concentrated mostly in the international standard ISO 26000: 2010. International sustainable development documents define corporate social responsibility as the long-term commitment of the companies to act ethically and promote economic development while improving the quality of life of the employees, their families and society in general (Bobir', 2013). Thus, the social responsibility of the employers to protect the health of employees is the obligation of the employer to behave ethically in terms of occupational and process safety, health care, the formation of environmentally friendly workplace, healthy lifestyles and to promote the accumulation of the health capital of the employees.

The purpose of the work: the article is devoted to the study of the state of the employers' social responsibility for maintaining the health of the employees in Ukraine.

The author focuses on the following tasks: to determine the employers' attitude towards the employees' health; which health improvement practices are common among the employers.

2. Methodology

The study was conducted in two phases:

Phase 1. sociological analysis (questionnaire survey of employers) according to the questionnaire developed by the author.

Phase 2: content analysis of the information resources, which reflect similar empirical research demonstrating employers' attitude towards employees' health protection in Ukraine, as well as content analysis of corporate projects on health safety of the employees at enterprises, basing on open source data in Ukraine.

The author conducted a survey among employers of 20 medium and large enterprises with more than 251 employees occupied in the mechanic engineering industry in Kharkiv and Kharkiv region in March-May 2019. The reason for the choice of industrial enterprises was that the largest number of employees involved in this industry work with hazardous working conditions (57% as of December 31, 2017). The studied sample is not representative, but it reflects the characteristics of the studied (general) population and will allow to identify trends in the studied object - the attitude of the employers towards the issues of health protection of the employees.

The printed questionnaire was sent to the respondents by mail and sent to the e-mails of the enterprises. The employees of the Main Department of Statistics of Kharkiv provided assistance in conducting the survey. The questionnaire was drawn up in accordance with the purposes of the study, and it served to obtain only the information that solved the tasks of the study. The questionnaire included closed-ended questions of non-alternative type (menu-driven questions), i.e. a person could choose several answers from the offered options. 18 questionnaires were suitable for the further processing. The processed results are presented in the form of diagrams: the percentage of respondents, who answered a specific question, was calculated as a proportion of the total number of respondents. In order to eliminate the shortcomings of the questionnaire related to subjectivity, reliability, completeness of information, the author has combined the questionnaire survey with other methods of primary information gathering - content analysis (Phase 2). Methods of analysis, synthesis and generalization were also applied in the study.

3. Results

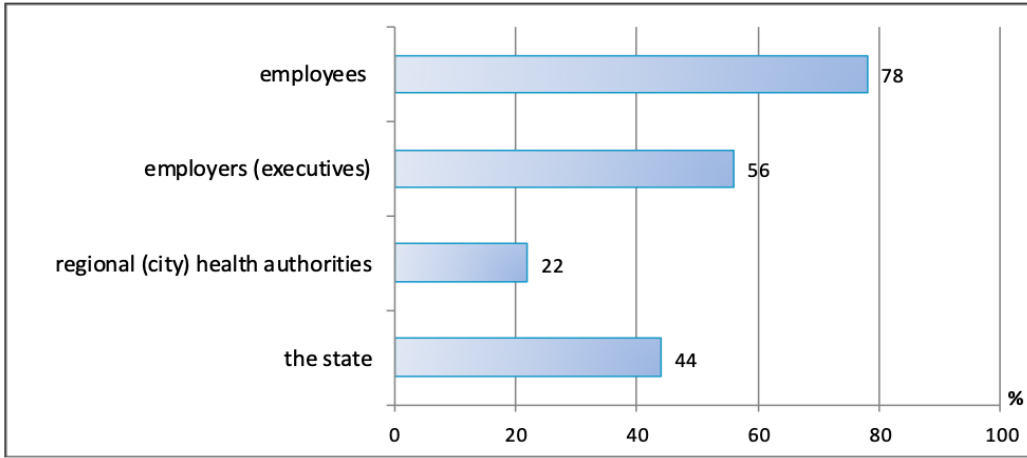
3.1. Phase 1. Sociological analysis (questionnaire survey of employers) according to the questionnaire developed by the author

The following offers the results of the employers' survey regarding their attitude to the health protection of the employees in Kharkiv and Kharkiv region.

Figure 1 shows the opinions divided between the employers regarding the parties responsible for the employees' health. Most employers think that the employees are responsible for their health, and less employers think that health authorities are responsible for the employees' health. It should be noted that while most respondents believe that responsibility for the health is an employee's personal matter, more than half of the respondents do not decline their own responsibility.

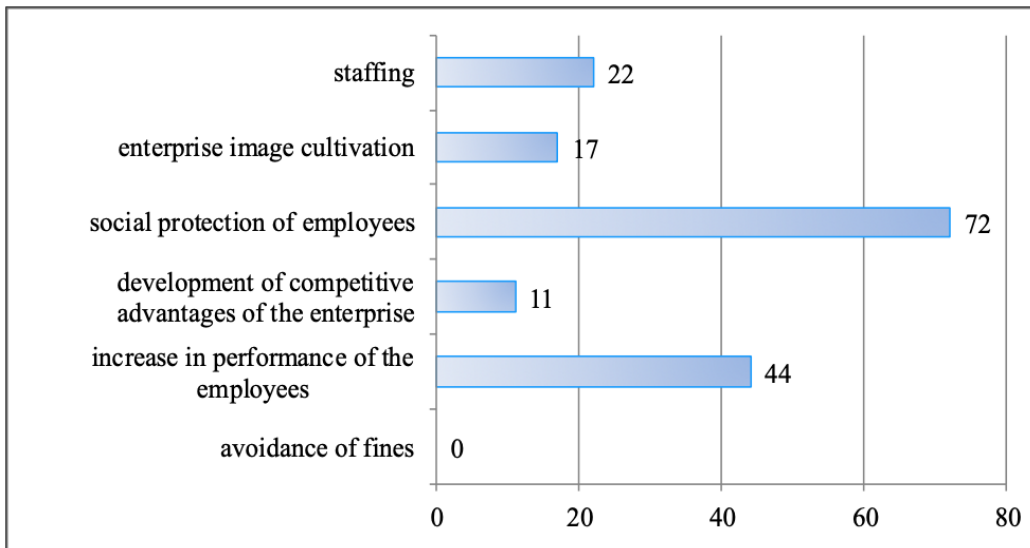
Figure 1

Distribution of the respondents' answers to the question "Please, determine the party, who is responsible for the employee's health", %



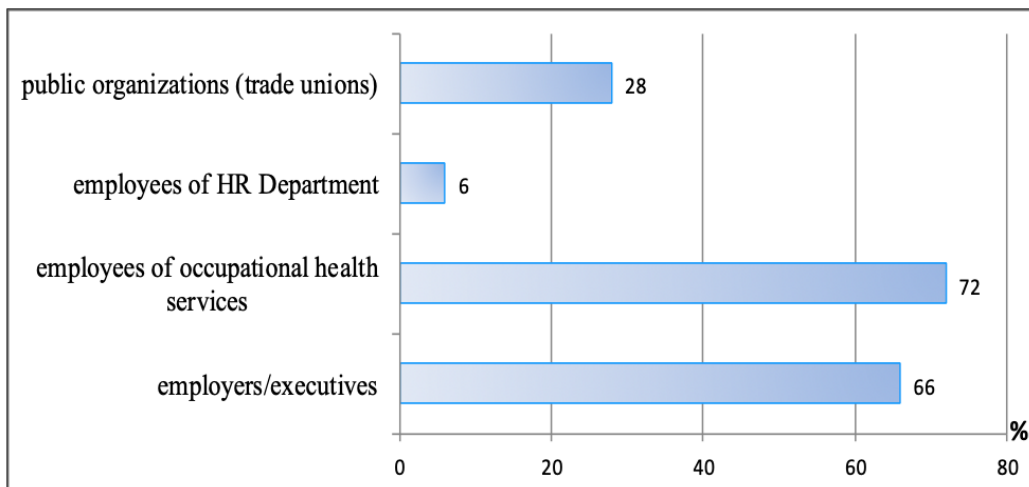
Employers were asked to determine the reason why it is necessary to care about the health of the employees. Most employers consider their employees' health concerns as social protection. Less executives think this is a way of generating competitive strengths (Figure 2). The result may be interpreted in the following way: the employers have prevailing Soviet-era approach to the protection of employees' health as an element of the social protection system; there is a lack of understanding of health as capital, a resource that cultivates the image and competitiveness of the enterprise.

Figure 2
Distribution of the respondents' answers to the question "What is the health care of the employees of your enterprise needed for?", %



Most employers think that occupational health services shall be involved in the development of a strategy for the employees' health protection; less group thinks that the HR Department is responsible for this issue (Figure 3). Two thirds of the executives do not decline responsibility for the strategy development (66%). At the same time, their responses show the weakness of trade unions in solving the employee health issues.

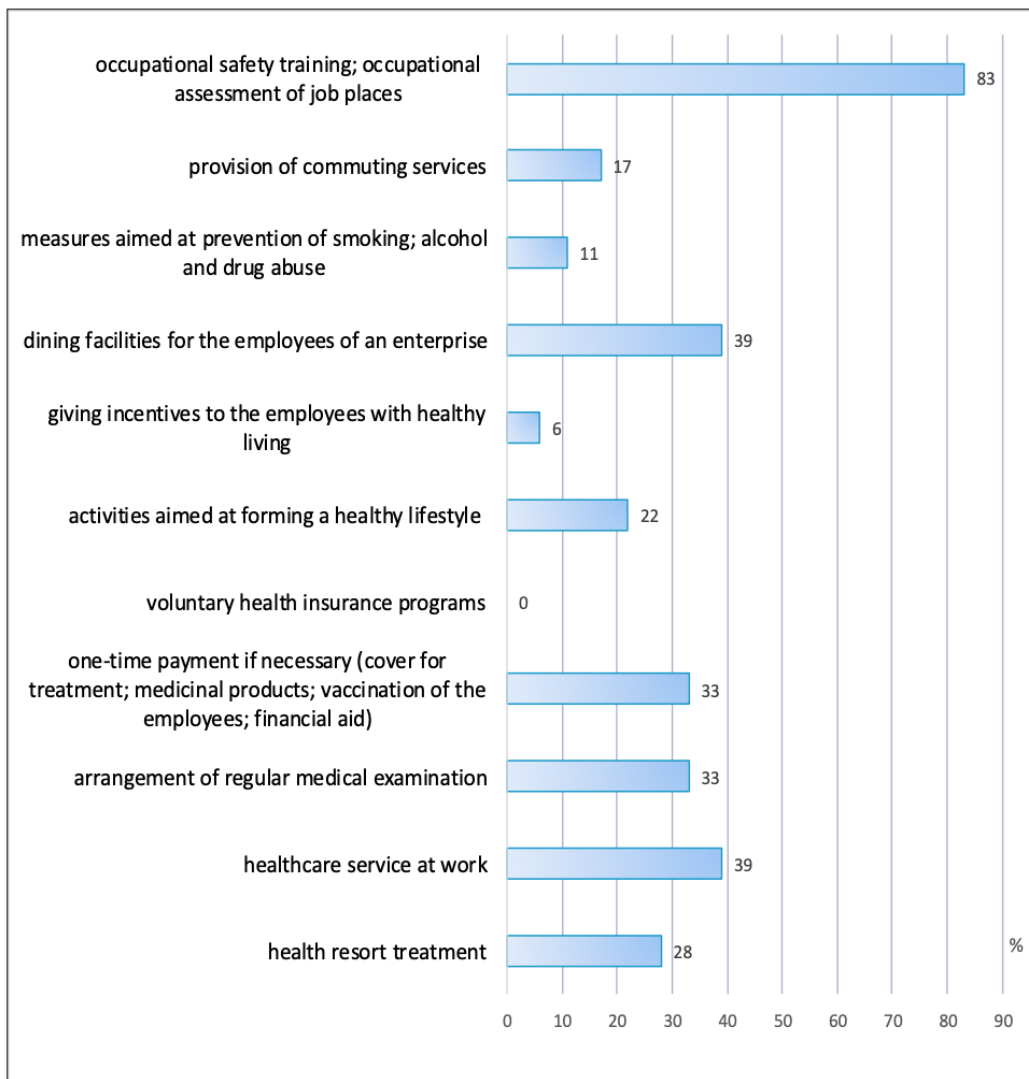
Figure 3
Distribution of the respondents' answers to the question "Who should be involved in the development of the enterprise health care strategy", %



The employers were asked to indicate existing at the enterprise measures aimed at improvement of the health of the employees (Figure 4). The most common tool was the measure of “occupational safety training” and the least common was giving the incentives to the employees, who live a healthy lifestyle. It should be mentioned that no respondents indicated voluntary health insurance programs. To date, employers rarely apply the methods of giving incentives to the employees, who live a healthy lifestyle - only 6% of respondents encourage employees with healthy living; one fifth (22%) - implement activities aimed at forming a healthy lifestyle (group competitions, attending gyms, swimming pools, etc.). At 7 enterprises (39%) there are still healthcare services (health units, health centers).

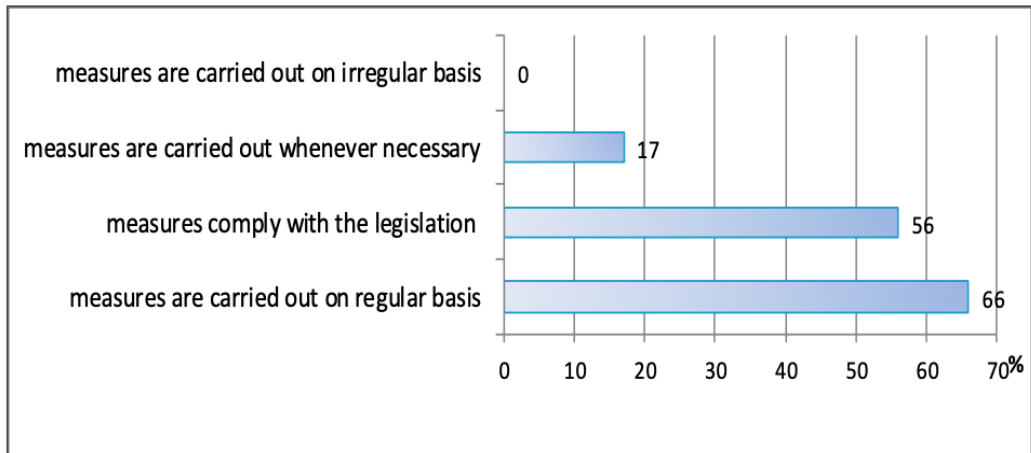
Figure 4

Distribution of the respondents' answers to the question “Please, tick which of the proposed measures are implemented at your enterprise for improvement of the employees’ health”, %



According to the most executives' answers the preventative and health protection measures, which are carried out at the enterprise, comply with the legislation; less executives indicate that these measures are carried out whenever necessary (Figure 5).

Figure 5
Distribution of the respondents' answers to the question "How are the preventative and health protection measures carried out at the enterprise", %



Respondents indicated that the most preferable form of additional investments in health care of the employees is one-time payment in case of an employee's illness (which is quite justified by expensive medical care in the country), and the least preferable form is the opening of their own medical office (Figure 6).

Figure 6
Distribution of the respondents' answers to the question "What forms of additional investment in employee health care would be most applicable for you?", %

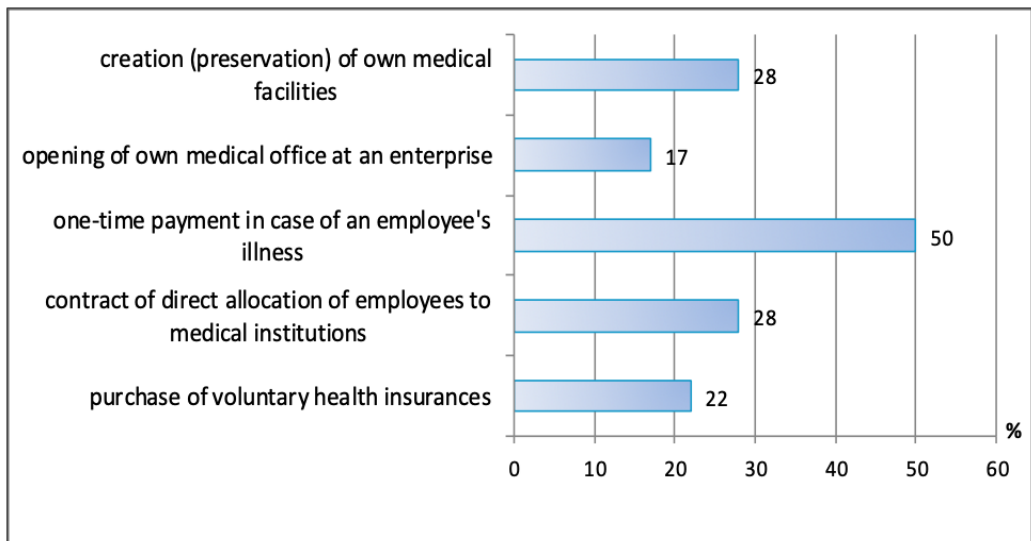
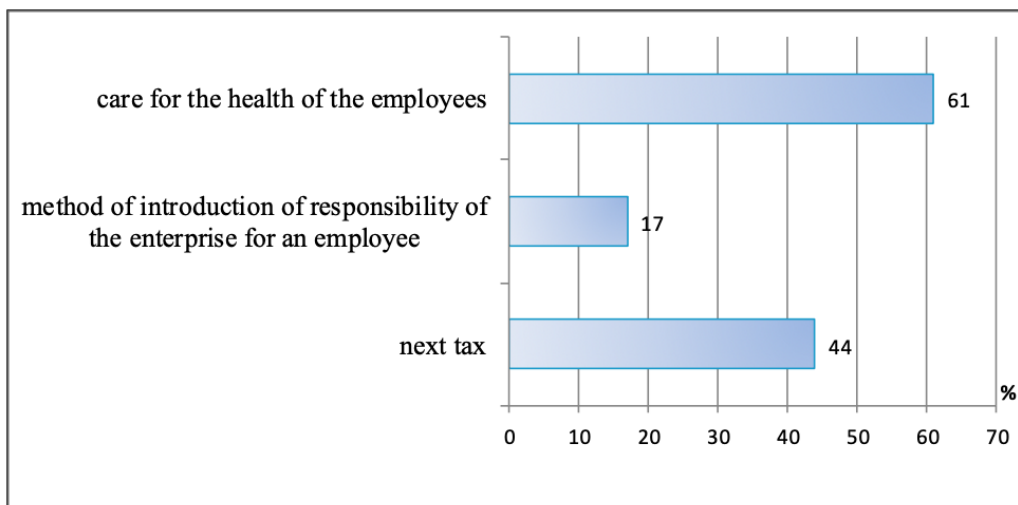


Figure 7 shows that the employers have different opinions on the possibility of introducing of compulsory contributions for the health insurance. Most employers consider the introduction of compulsory contributions for the health insurance as care for the health of the employees; less employees consider them as a way of implementation the responsibility of the enterprise for the health of the employee.

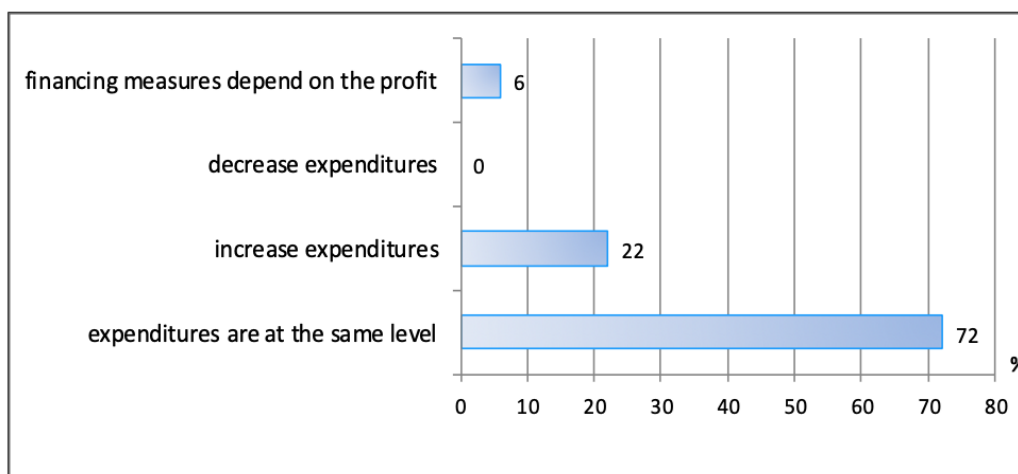
Figure 7
Distribution of the respondents' answers to the question "How do you consider the possible introduction of a compulsory contribution for health insurance?", %



In 2019 most employers did not plan to reduce healthcare expenditures for the employees (72% of respondents), more than a fifth of respondents (22%) planned to increase those expenditures compared to the previous year, at 6% of the enterprises financing measures depend on the profit (Figure 8).

Figure 8

Distribution of the respondents' answers to the question "What is the projection of your enterprise for budgeting the employee healthcare in 2019?", %



Respondents were also asked to rate the priority of measures that would increase employers' responsibility for employee health (Figure 9). Among the priorities the employers have indicated an increase in contributions for the occupational safety and health sector and running an extensive campaign on social responsibility awareness. The least prioritized were the following measures: strengthened inspection of supervisory authorities and push from trade unions.

Figure 9

Distribution of the respondents' answers to the question "What measures will increase the responsibility of the employers for the health of the employees?", %

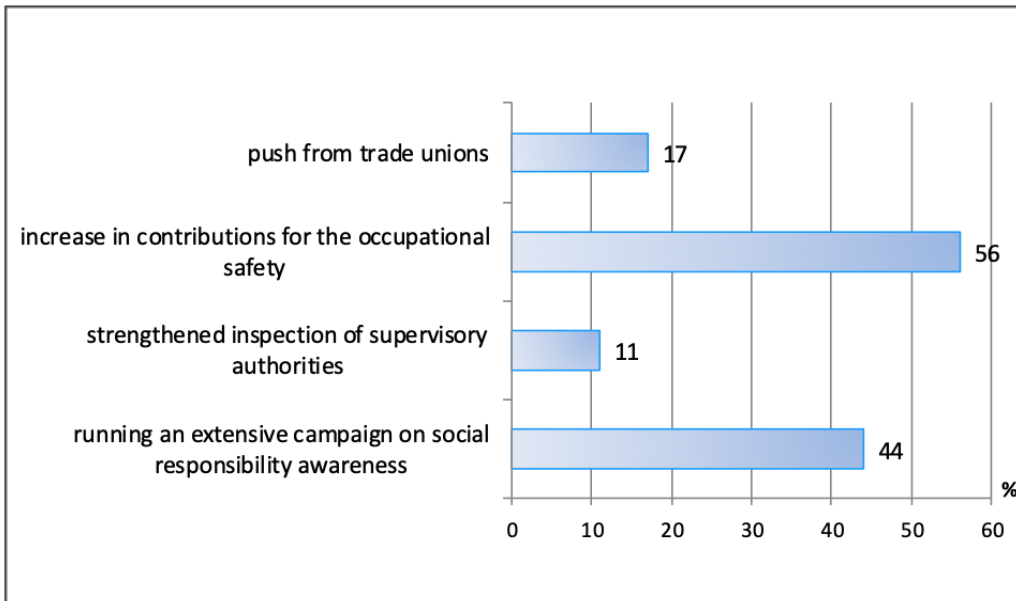
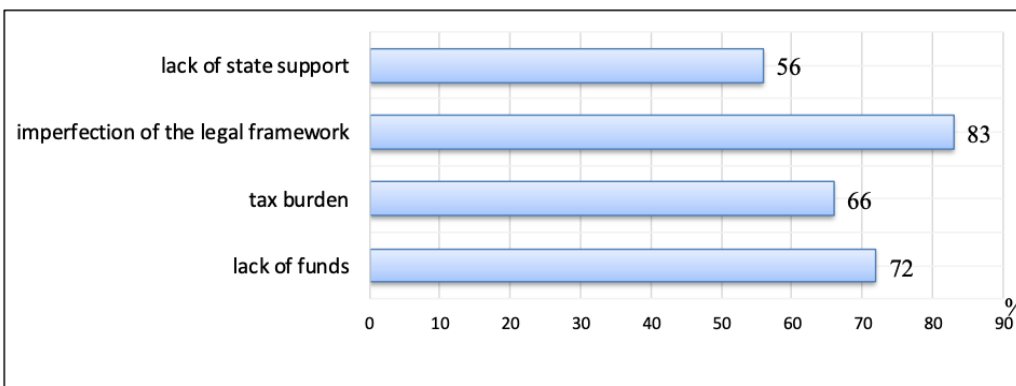


Figure 10 shows how different the employers' opinions are on the main obstacles to the implementation of social responsibility for maintaining the health of the employees. Most employers indicated the imperfection of the legal framework, and less employers indicated the lack of state support.

Figure 10
Distribution of the respondents' answers to the question "What are the main obstacles to the implementation of the social responsibility of the employers to protect the health of the employees?", %



2.1. Phase 2. Content analysis of information resources, which reflect research findings demonstrating employers' attitudes towards the employee health protection in Ukraine, as well as content analysis of corporate projects on health safety of the employees at enterprises, basing on the open source data in Ukraine.

The results of this phase are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1
The findings of the studies reflecting the social responsibility of the employers for maintaining the health of the employees in Ukraine

Reference, year of the study	Sample, respondents	Findings of the study
(Hrishnova, 2014, P.109-111), 2011	25 enterprises of different types of ownership and activity of Rivne region. Administration representatives; trade union representatives.	Percentage of the investigated enterprises, where the procedure for identifying threats to the health and safety of the employees is established: by 80% of enterprises – according to the administration representatives; by 60% of enterprises – according to the trade union representatives.
(Krekoten', 2014), 2012	11 enterprises of Vinnytsia and Zhytomyr regions. Employees of the enterprises, 1760 persons.	The amount of people, who indicated the absence of preventive measures against diseases and occupational injuries: 47.6% of employees of industrial enterprises; 26.8% of employees of transport enterprises; 85.8% of employees of agricultural enterprises.
(Faktoy, vlijajushhie na sostojanie zdorov'ja ofisnyh rabotnikov, 2013), 2013	A statistical study on the factors that affect the health of office employees. 3540 job applicants (male (36%) and female (64%), average age of 20-35)	More than 50% of respondents think that their health has deteriorated due to negative factors at the workplace, 25% of respondents draw attention to significant deterioration in health, and 5% of respondents feel healthier due to work. Factors that affect the health are as follows: unbalanced and nervous atmosphere at work (50%), uncomfortable workplace, large crowds in a small room, uncomfortable temperature conditions, abnormal work schedule, overwork due to insufficient number of employees, inability to arrange healthy eating.
(Ukrainskih rabotodatelej ne volnuet zdorov'e sotrudnikov – medicinskoe strahovanie est' tol'ko u 14% rabotnikov, 2015), 2015	450 respondents	More than a third of employers do not care about the employees' health. 20% of respondents have a regular working day, 14% of respondents are provided with health insurance, 40% of respondents have the opportunity to take a seek leave when necessary, about 10% of respondents work in air-conditioned offices with comfortable office furniture, 5% of respondents are provided with gym tickets, 4% of respondents have full lunches at the expense of the company, 4% of respondents have office rest areas, 3% of respondents were compensated with health improvement during the vacation, 2% of respondents have certificates to the pool.
(Zinchenko, Saprykina, 2017), 2018	The Unified State Register of Legal Entities and Public Organizations of Ukraine (except for private entrepreneurs) was used as the basis of the sample. Executives of 400 enterprises.	Most Ukrainian companies understand social responsibility as development and support of the company employees (82%), most of them (59%) take no action on employment practices. Understanding of social responsibility is concentrated in obligatory measures (actual provision of state guarantees) - salaries, working hours, holidays. Special measures to protect the health of employees are carried out by a small number of enterprises: - 21% - health insurance, health of employees (fully or partially); - 13% - possibility to visit sports facilities (gyms, swimming pool, clubs).
(Ukraincy prodolzhat sgorat' na rabote. Kak najti balans, 2018), 2018	Visitors to the portal in February 2018	More than 90% of employees overwork or have an irregular work schedule, 25% of which overwork on a permanent basis; 35% - often; 31% - rarely; only 9% have a regular work schedule. At the same time, only 8% of employees get extra payment for overwork; 58% of employees never get extra paid. Those who are paid: 29% - get payment that is calculated according to the law; 25% - lower than required by law; 12% - at a higher rate.

Table 2

Analysis of corporate projects for maintaining the health of the employees at enterprises basing on open source data in Ukraine

Project	Measures	Results
"Nebesna Krynysia" (Saprykina, 2016b, p.15-16)	Conducting Health Management" trainings that help office workers with sedentary work to have healthy lifestyles.	More than 30 corporate trainings and public speeches have been held. More than 2000 Kyiv residents and office workers have taken part in the survey. Dozens of articles have been published.
"Pohovorymo pro zdorovya" PAT "Prykarpattia" (Saprykina, 2016a)	Staff meetings were held with physicians; fitness breaks (production gymnastics) were introduced; series of "Long Life Health" trainings for the staff were completed; a group of activists was prepared - health managers, whose task is to implement wellness practices and programs for healthy lifestyles in the team; "Health Festival" was arranged and held on World Health Day and World Occupational Safety Day.	Improved vision and weight loss in overweight people; improvement of employees' awareness of occupational health culture. In addition, the final medical examination showed a positive trend in reducing the incidence for diseases of different groups.
"Wellbeing" "Deloitte" (Saprykina (Ed.), 2018)	It has been implemented since 2015 and covers a range of activities aimed at employees' physical health, supporting an active lifestyle and fulfilling their social mission through charity and volunteerism. Every second employee of the company participates in various Wellbeing events annually. In 2017, the program was strengthened by measures aimed at mental health of the employees.	The results of the test of the project participants showed an increase in the psycho-emotional state of the employees (test was carried out at the beginning and end of the project): Oxford scale of happiness + 9%; emotional awareness (awareness of one's own emotions and inner state) + 4%; managing your emotions (emotional flexibility) + 10%; self-motivation (managing one's own behavior through managing emotions) + 8%; empathy + 6%; viability (indicator that determines control, engagement, risk acceptance; reflects overall level of resilience) + 10%. Results of an anonymous poll: 88% of those surveyed indicated that it became easier for them to concentrate on tasks; 75% said they found it easier to deal with stress.

4. Conclusions

The author's research includes the following findings:

- executives of Kharkiv enterprises do not recognize their participation in and contribution to solving the health problems in terms of social responsibility. This may be due to the fact that they have Soviet experience of safe job management, therefore protection of the employees' health is associated with social protection more than with social responsibility;
- the enterprises are subjects of health protection of the employees and operate within the framework of the legislation: they pay compensation for harmful working conditions, seek vacations, conduct training in occupational safety, certification of workplaces (however, according to the author, these actions are ineffective: enterprises expenditures for disease prevention, occupational safety and health, healthy rest and medical services are minimal; safety training, medical examinations are conducted formally, etc. (Ohanezova, 2016a);
- the responsibility for health is primarily the responsibility of the employees, but some employers do not decline their own responsibility; trade unions have little impact on the health and safety of the enterprises;
- Kharkiv enterprises (as well as enterprises in Ukraine as a whole) did not receive the proper promotion of health improvement programs (such as annual dispensary, vaccination, hot meals, establishment of their own health centers, partial or full payment for health resorts; rest homes, children's camps, participation in sports competitions). Most of these measures are very rare in the practice of Ukrainian enterprises, although the need for them is obvious;
- respondents, as hindrance to the development of social responsibility for the health protection of the employees, recognized the imperfection of the legislation, lack of state support, lack of funds, tax burden (according to the opinions of more than 50% of the respondents).

In general, the social responsibility of the employers for protection of the employees' health has not been properly developed in Ukraine (Table 1). Employers, taking into account the interests of business profitability, do not care about the health of their employees (economize on occupational safety, increase working hours, work intensity, etc.). In the country a small number of enterprises use employee health improvement programs (Table 2).

Under the current circumstances the health of the employees in Ukraine is critical, it is necessary to apply measures of external influence on the employers in order to increase their responsibility for the health of their employees. This can be implemented by means of institutionalization of social responsibility of the employers.

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