

Occupational Pressure Among District Health Office Staff

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Abstract: *Occupational pressure refers to the external demands and expectations implemented upon individuals during their work or occupation. It is a regular aspect of the workplace and can serve as a motivator for individuals to perform well and fulfil job requirements. There are many factors that can cause occupational stress, such as work duties, time constraints, and high demands. While occupational pressure can motivate individuals to excel and reach their full potential, excessive or prolonged pressure can result in tension and adverse outcomes. When individuals feel overburdened by the demands and expectations imposed upon them, it can harm their well-being and performance at work. This study determines the current mental health and emotional stress level among healthcare workers in District Health Office. The respondents were evaluated about factors affecting pressure at the workplace and DASS21 questionnaires was used to find out the level of mental health among respondents. Most of the respondents have good mental health but there are still a few workers who have depression, anxiety, and stress on a highly severe scale. A suggestion to mitigate workplace stress involves fostering positive relationships between supervisors and colleagues, setting clear objectives, and implementing efficient time management strategies.*

Keywords: occupational pressure, stress, mental health, healthcare

1. Introduction

The mental strain that a person's line of work can cause is referred to as occupational pressure. The condition known as occupational pressure lasts for a long time. It can be controlled by first gaining an awareness of the factors that contribute to stressful situations at work and then taking action to improve them. In addition, pressure is a response to the environment and the conditions in the surrounding area. A person can suffer pressure due to excessive thinking, many issues in life, or the requirement to finish a task above their capabilities. Long-term concerns, such as disease, day-to-day annoyances, such as traffic jams, and people in the environment, can all contribute to the cause of pressure. The subject of pressure in the workplace is a persistent one that is frequently brought up for discussion inside each organisation. This issue can be found in virtually all organisations, even huge ones, such as those in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan. Because it can harm an organisation's efficiency and effectiveness, addressing the issue of pressure as effectively as is humanly possible is one of the most essential things that can be done right now.

Based on the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 that was released on 5 October 2019 by the Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who served as the ninth Prime Minister of Malaysia, the government of Malaysia has the goal of making Malaysia a country that continues to develop in a

sustainable manner along with distribution of an economy that is fair, equitable, and inclusive at all levels of income groups, ethnicity, region, and supply chain. This strategic core plan also places an emphasis, on the part of the government, on the health and happiness of the population as one of its goals. This is done to produce well-balanced people on a physical, emotional, and spiritual level when they are born.

Many different things can bring on the pressure that is tied to work. For instance, a person may experience a sense of being under pressure if the requirements of their employment (such as their hours or responsibilities) are higher than what they can easily manage. Other things that might cause pressure at work include having disagreements with co-workers or supervisors, dealing with a perpetual state of change, and being faced with potential dangers to one's job security, such as being laid off.

2. Methodology

This is descriptive cross-sectional research providing a snapshot of the occupational pressure status of the staff at one of the units in the Health District Office in 2023. Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale 21 (DASS21) was used to measure the negative emotional states of depression, anxiety and stress (Khasimah Ismail, 2015). It is divided into three sections, the first part concentrates on the respondents' background characteristics, including age, gender, salary, and education level, comprising ten questions. The second part focused on workplace stress factors and consisted of five parts, including task area assessment, supervisor leadership assessment, workplace convenience, and others. The third part concentrated on anxiety, depression, and stress scale (DASS21), with response options ranging from "was not at all" to "very often."

The responses of each participant were evaluated to determine their level of depression, anxiety, and stress. These levels were classified as normal, mild, simple, severe, and very severe based on their total score. Other than that, factors influencing workplace stress can also be determined. The total number of questionnaires distributed was 112, and the response rate was 96.4%.

3. Result and Discussion

Table 1 shows the first section of questionnaire which is socio-demographic characteristics information of the respondents. From 72.2% males and 27.8% females, the majority of respondents' ages range from 30 and 40 years, (44.4%). Most of the respondents are Malay ethnic (91.7%) had a level of education of Diploma (44.4%), earned between RM2000 and RM4000 per month (62.0%), and nearly half lived less than 10 kilometers from their workplace. Table 2 till Table 6 illustrate the respondent response in second section of the questionnaire on aspects affecting stress at workplace. Table 2 shows the survey data on task area assessment, showing that most of the respondents chose scale 3 (neutral) for statement number 1 to 4. For statement number 5, 50.0% of respondents strongly disagree that they are consistently being instructed to work extra hours without receiving the corresponding overtime compensation. Table 3 shows the data regarding the leadership of supervisors or leaders at work. 43.5% of the respondents agree that work instructions from supervisors are clear and easy to understand. 41.7% agree that their supervisors or leader always give feedback and guidance. 33.3% agree that their supervisor or leader has good decision-making skills. 38% agree that the division of duty is done fairly, and 40.0% of respondents agree that their supervisor or leader were accepting opinions from subordinates. Table 4 shows the data regarding appreciation and recognition for employees. 35.2% agree that the supervisors or

leaders recognize and appreciate good work. For statement 2 and 3, which regarding promotion and incentives given to the employee, most of the respondents were neutral. Table 5 shows survey data on workplace relations with most of respondents strongly agree that they have positive relationship with supervisor/leader, and colleagues. Table 6 shows the data on workplace facilities. Most of the respondents agree that their workplace is equipped with basic facilities.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Characteristics		Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	72.2
	Female	27.8
Age	20-30	27.8
	31-40	44.4
	41-50	13.9
	51-60	13.9
Ethnic group	Malay	91.7
	Chinese	4.6
	Indian	1.9
	Others	1.9
Marital status	Single	19.4
	Married	79.6
	Widowed	1.0
Educational level	SPM / SPMV	28.7
	STPM	0.9
	Diploma	44.4
	Degree	13.9
	Master Degree	1.9
	Others	10.2
Gross monthly income	RM 2000 and below	15.7
	RM 2000 – RM 3999	62.0
	RM 4000 – RM 5999	17.6
	RM 6000 and above	4.6
Distance to workplace	<10 km	50.0
	10 – 20 km	34.2
	21 – 40 km	11.1
	41 – 60 km	1.8
	> 60 km	2.8

Table 2: Assessment of task area

No	Statement	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
1	The workload made is not commensurate with the abilities and positions held	18 (16.7%)	21 (19.4%)	34 (31.5%)	27 (25.0%)	8 (7.4%)
2	The need to carry out other duties	8 (7.4%)	14 (13.0%)	47 (43.5%)	23 (21.3%)	16 (14.8%)
3	Duties that have to deal with the bureaucracy of other units	7 (6.5%)	25 (23.1%)	39 (36.1%)	25 (23.1%)	12 (11.1%)
4	Distribution of work that is not relevant to the actual scope of work	16 (14.8%)	31 (28.7%)	35 (32.4%)	17 (15.7%)	9 (8.3%)
5	Always ordered to work overtime but not paid with allowance	54 (50.0%)	23 (21.3%)	19 (17.6%)	7 (6.5%)	5 (4.6%)
Total		103 (19.1%)	114 (21.1%)	174 (32.2%)	99 (18.3%)	50 (9.35%)

Table 3: Leadership of supervisor or leader

No	Statement	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
1	Instruction from the supervisor / leader are clear and easy to understand.	4 (3.7%)	5 (4.6%)	22 (20.4%)	47 (43.5%)	30 (27.8%)
2	The supervisor / leader always gives feedback and guidance on assignments	1 (0.9%)	8 (7.4%)	25 (23.1%)	45 (41.7%)	29 (26.9%)
3	Supervisor / leaders are skilled at making good decisions.	1 (0.9%)	7 (6.5%)	35 (32.4%)	36 (33.3%)	29 (26.9%)
4	The division of duties by the supervisor / leader is done fairly.	2 (1.9%)	10 (9.3%)	37 (34.3%)	41 (38.0%)	18 (16.7%)
5	Supervisor / leader always accept suggestion /opinions from subordinates and give encouragement.	2 (1.9%)	9 (8.3%)	31 (28.7%)	43 (40.0%)	23 (21.3%)
Total		10 (1.9%)	39 (7.2%)	150 (27.8%)	212 (39.3%)	129 (23.9%)

Table 4: Award, promotion and recognition

No	Statement	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
1	Supervisors/leaders recognize and appreciate good work	3 (2.8%)	13 (12.0%)	32 (29.6%)	38 (35.2%)	22 (20.4%)
2	Promotion policy that is fair and based on ability and achievement	3 (2.8%)	10 (9.3%)	46 (42.6%)	35 (32.4%)	14 (13.0%)
3	APC incentives and other recognitions are based on individual performance and achievements	5 (4.6%)	16 (14.8%)	46 (42.6%)	24 (22.2%)	17 (15.7%)
Total		11 (3.4%)	39 (12.0%)	124 (38.3%)	97 (30.0%)	53 (16.4%)

Table 5: Workplace relations

No	Statement	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
1	Have a good relationship with the supervisor / leader	2 (1.9%)	3 (2.8%)	22 (20.4%)	37 (34.3%)	44 (40.7%)
2	Have a good relationship with other staff.	1 (0.9%)	1 (0.9%)	18 (16.7%)	37 (34.3%)	51 (47.2%)
3	Colleagues always give help and encouragement	1 (0.9%)	3 (2.8%)	23 (21.3%)	33 (30.6%)	48 (44.4%)
4	Programs such as courses / leisure activities that are implemented can foster teamwork and strengthen relationships between staff.	5 (4.6%)	2 (1.9%)	18 (16.7%)	32 (29.6%)	51 (47.2%)
Total		9 (2.1%)	9 (2.1%)	81 (18.8%)	139 (32.2%)	194 (45.0%)

Table 6: Workplace facilities

No	Statement	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
1	Workplace / meeting room	5 (4.6%)	11 (10.2%)	30 (27.8%)	35 (32.4%)	27 (25.0%)
2	Pantry facilities	14 (12.9%)	17 (15.7%)	30 (27.8%)	26 (24.1%)	21 (19.4%)
3	Toilet facilities	6 (5.6%)	12 (11.1%)	36 (33.3%)	30 (27.8%)	24 (22.2%)
4	Internet line / intranet system of the department	13 (12.0%)	15 (13.9%)	32 (29.6%)	32 (29.6%)	16 (14.8%)
5	Air conditioning system / air	4	19	19	40	26

	conditioner	(3.7%)	(17.6%)	(17.6%)	(37.0%)	(24.1%)
6	Surau facilities	2 (1.9%)	6 (5.6%)	26 (24.1%)	36 (33.3%)	38 (35.2%)
7	Office equipment (computer/ phone / printer and photocopier)	16 (14.8%)	15 (13.9%)	37 (34.3%)	25 (23.1%)	15 (13.9%)
Total		60 (7.9%)	95 (12.6%)	210 (27.8%)	224 (29.6%)	167 (22.1%)

The screening question assesses depression, anxiety, and stress. The scores are classified as normal, mild, moderate, severe, or extremely severe. 51.6, 46.3 and 63.9% of respondents have a normal scale of depression, anxiety, and stress score, respectively. For extremely severe cases, anxiety screening has the highest rate of 25.9%, followed by depression and stress screening at 13.0% and 4.6%, respectively. A total of 52 respondents (48.1%) are categorized in the high-risk group. They are the ones with moderate, severe, and extremely severe DASS-21 scale, and they have a high risk of getting mental health issues.

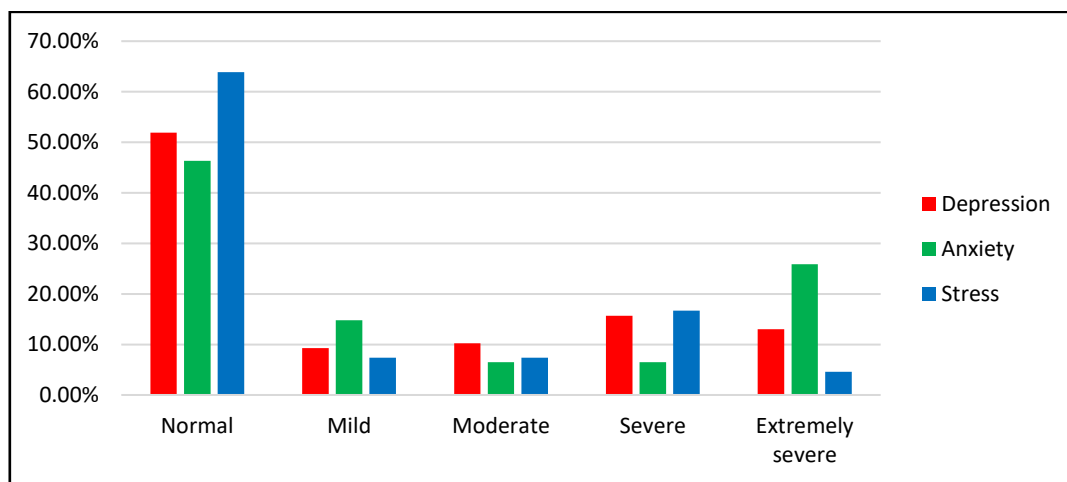


Figure 1: Depression, anxiety and stress scale among respondents

Job satisfaction is defined as an individual's positive emotional reaction to a specific job. It is an emotional reaction to a work caused by a person comparing actual results with desired, expected, or entitled people (Oshagbemi, 1999). Some argue that it is simply how a person's work relates to their respective work, ie. whether they like or dislike the task, nature of work, and supervision (Spector, 1997). Overall, job satisfaction is graded on a scale of 1 to 5. Scale 1 (strongly disagree) is not represented in this pie chart because no respondents selected it, yielding 0%. When it comes to scale selection, Scale 4 (agree) has the most respondents (40.7%). With this information, the researcher can predict that respondents in the DASS-21 high-risk category are more likely to select scales 2 (disagree) and 3 (neutral). This is due the fact that the number of respondents in the high-risk category is only 52, or 48.1%.

The DASS-21 is a 21-item standardized assessment which assists in the identification of risk factors for depression, anxiety, and stress. It is not intended to diagnose any condition, but rather to determine whether a respondent is at risk of serious mental health problems. The DASS-21 is divided into five categories: normal, mild, moderate, severe, and extremely severe. High-risk respondents (48.1%) are divided into two categories: normal and high risk. Depression, characterized by sadness and emotional exhaustion, can be caused by a variety of factors. Socio-demographics and job satisfaction can influence the cause of depression, emphasizing the importance of one's environment on one's mental health.

4. Conclusion

In summary, the study reveals that the factors influencing occupational pressure have a discernible impact on the overall job satisfaction of participants at the District Health Office, with satisfaction levels reaching a point considered acceptable. Notably, the highest scores on the depression, anxiety, and stress scale fall within the normal range. However, the anxiety scores indicate a relatively elevated value in the category of extremely severe. This might stem from anxiety's role as a natural defense mechanism in response to stress-inducing situations. Furthermore, 48.1% respondents fall into the high-risk category, underscoring the importance of prioritizing staff well-being. This entails implementing feasible measures to alleviate workload burdens and establishing realistic, achievable goals within appropriate timeframes. In conclusion, given the prevalence of occupational pressure, particularly among healthcare workers, it is recommended to conduct more comprehensive studies addressing diverse challenges within the healthcare sector. These efforts can contribute to enhancing the current support framework within the healthcare industry.

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