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OCCUPATIONAL STRESS: AN ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES

Ashgar Ali Ali Mohamed¹, Farheen Baig Sardar Baig¹, Muhamad Hassan Bin Ahmad¹
Arun Kasi¹

¹Ahmad Ibrahim Kuliyyah of Laws (AIKOL), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)

Abstract: Occupational stress may have an impact on the effectiveness of an organisation. Excessive workload or demand, stressful deadlines, long working hours, insufficient number of staff, lack of support from co-workers and supervisors, annoying co-workers, unsatisfied customers, and hazardous working conditions, among others are some of the underlying causes of occupational stress. Job uncertainty due to impending retrenchment, restructuring or management changes and hostile work environment could also give rise to occupational stress. Occupational stress often results in high dissatisfaction among the employees in terms of job mobility, burnout and poor work performance and less effective interpersonal relations at work. Excessive or unmanageable demands, insufficient support from co-workers and unsatisfactory working conditions may affect staff-motivation and productiveness. Long-term stress or traumatic events at work may have affect the workers physically and psychologically. In light of the above, this paper seeks to deliberate on the causes of occupational stress with reference to unmanageable workload, job insecurity, sexual harassment, workplace discrimination and employer's unlawful conduct.

Key words: *Stress, Occupational, Causes*

INTRODUCTION

The occupational stress in the present globalised world has fraught a tremendous concern to the employees and other stakeholders of organisations. This is a sombre dilemma in many organisations around the world and its impact can be substantial. Occupational stress can be defined as the gap between work-demands and individual-ability to fulfil those demands. The underlying cause of stress include lack of resources and equipment, heavy work schedule such as working late or overtime, under-staffing, increased workload and responsibility, poorly designed shift-work, tight deadlines, ineffective handling of bullying and harassment, uninteresting or uninspiring job, poor interpersonal relationship with superior, not corporative colleagues and worry of losing job due to uncertain economy condition affecting the organisation, among others. Occupational stress often results in high dissatisfaction among the employees in terms of job mobility, burnout, and poor work performance.

OBJECTIVE

The main aim of this study is to deliberate on the causes of occupational stress with reference to unmanageable workload, job insecurity, sexual harassment, workplace discrimination and employer's unlawful conduct.

FINDINGS

Occupational Stress: The Causes are as follows:

Unmanageable workloads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The key performance indicators (KPI) imposed on an employee to gauge performance which is unrealistic or unreasonable will give rise to unnecessary stress level amongst the workers in the workplace.
Job insecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feelings of life dissatisfaction, lack of self-esteem, lack of personal control and general psychological depression, and other stress related illness such as hypertension, cardiac disorders, and gastric ulcers, among others, which increase with continued unemployment.
Sexual Harassment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexual harassment refers to an improper, unbecoming and totally unacceptable conduct as it violates a person's honour and dignity.
Workplace Discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discrimination means a comparative unfair treatment of a person on grounds such as race, gender, disability, age and religious belief, it can cause to a lowered self-esteem, lack of self-confidence, mental distress, anxiety and depression.
Employer's wrongful conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It imposes a duty on the employer to treat the workers fairly and reasonably during employment and where dismissal is inevitable, it should be carried out in a justifiable manner.

CONCLUSION

Employer must ensure that the workers are treated fairly and that work assignments are reasonable and commensurate with the position and the capability of the worker to discharge. Overwhelming job demands or too high job expectation could lead to frequent sick leave or unplanned leave application due to stress related illnesses. Occupation stress may also arise when a worker is harassed or humiliated in the presence of a co-worker or customer of the company, when he or she is falsely accused of a gross misconduct such as theft, demotion involving reduced responsibilities and/or positioning within the corporate hierarchy where his or her newly assigned position involves a substantial reduction in salary and responsibilities, making a significant change in the employee's job location at short notice and forced resignation.

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