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The Influence of the Work Environment on the Mental and Physical Health of the Employees

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ABSTRACT ²²

The work environment ¹⁵ is an important factor that can affect the mental and physical health of employees. This study aims to analyze how various aspects of the work environment, including work pressure, social support, as well as the physical conditions of the workplace, contribute to the well-being of employees. Using a qualitative phenomenology-based approach, this study explores the subjective experiences of employees through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and direct observation in the workplace. Research participants were selected by purposive sampling with the criteria of having worked for at least one year in various positions and departments. The results showed that high workload and lack of social support contribute to stress and fatigue, while the physical condition of the workplace that is not ergonomic increases the risk of musculoskeletal disorders. Conversely, a supportive work environment, such as work flexibility and good social relationships, can improve employee well-being. These findings indicate that companies need to improve work ²¹ policies and practices to create a healthier and more productive environment. By understanding the factors that affect the mental and physical health of employees, organizations can develop more effective strategies in improving the well-being and performance of their workforce.

Keywords: work environment, mental health, physical health, employee welfare

INTRODUCTION ¹⁶

The work environment is an important factor that contributes to the well-being and productivity of employees. The work environment includes not only physical aspects, such as lighting, temperature and ergonomics of the workplace, but also psychosocial factors, such as relationships between employees, workload and organizational culture. A good work environment can improve employee performance and satisfaction, while an environment that is not conducive can negatively affect their mental and physical health.

Mental and physical health of employees is a major element in the sustainability of an organization. Stress due to high workload, pressure from a less supportive work environment, and physical factors that are not ergonomic can cause various health problems, such as fatigue, sleep disorders, and even chronic diseases due to work stress. Several studies have shown that a poor work environment is correlated with increased cases of burnout, high absenteeism, as

well as low employee productivity. In various industries, there is an increase in cases of work stress and health problems caused by a less than optimal work environment. Case examples from several companies show that the imbalance between work demands and employee well-being can have an impact on decreased performance and job satisfaction. Unfortunately, there are still many companies that do not have effective policies to address this problem, so further understanding is needed regarding the extent to which the work environment affects the mental and physical health of employees.

This research has high relevance in the context of Human Resource Management and organizational policy. By understanding the effect of the work environment on employee health, companies can design better policies to improve the well-being of their workforce. The results of this study can also be used as a basis in developing strategies to increase productivity and reduce employee turnover by creating a healthier and supportive work environment. The work environment significantly influences employees' mental and physical health. A well-designed physical workplace environment can enhance organizational culture, employee satisfaction, and performance (Sapiah Abdul Hamed et al., 2024). Factors such as noise, lighting, temperature, and air quality impact worker well-being (Jankalová, 2020). Poor workplace conditions, including unsuitable furniture, inadequate ventilation, and lack of safety measures, can lead to occupational diseases and decreased productivity (Edem Mj et al., 2017). Workplace ergonomics, including air quality, lighting, and acoustics, have a significant relationship with employee satisfaction and health. Inadequate ergonomics can result in psychological distress, depression, anxiety, and physical ailments like heart disease and infections (Zafir Mohd Makhbul, 2013). Employers play a crucial role in creating a healthy and safe work environment that promotes mental, physical, and social well-being (Jankalová, 2020). Improving workplace comfort can lead to better physical and emotional health outcomes for employees (Zafir Mohd Makhbul, 2013).

This study aims to identify the relationship between the work environment with the mental and physical health of employees. The scope of the study includes certain industry sectors with a predetermined number of respondents, as well as various aspects of the work environment that can affect the well-being of employees. With a systematic approach, it is hoped that this research can provide new insights for the world of work in an effort to create a healthier and more sustainable environment.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach to explore the subjective experiences of employees related to the influence of the work environment on their mental and physical health. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the meaning individuals give to their experiences in the context of the work environment. Thus, the study does not only focus on numbers or statistics, but rather on how employees perceive, understand and respond to their work environment. The method used in this study is

phenomenology, which aims to understand the experience of individuals as they experience it. Phenomenology allows researchers to delve deeper into how the work environment affects the health of employees, both physically and mentally, by understanding their perspectives firsthand. With this approach, research can capture the subjective reality of employees, including the challenges, pressures, and ways they cope with the impact of the work environment on their well-being. This study was conducted in various companies or agencies that have variations in working environment conditions. Location selection aims to obtain more extensive and comprehensive data on the influence of the work environment on employee health. Research subjects were selected using purposive sampling technique, in which participants were selected based on certain criteria relevant to the research objectives. The main criteria for the selection of participants include employees who have worked for at least one year, come from various positions and departments, and are willing to share their experiences regarding the work environment and its impact on health. Given the variation in the characteristics of the participants, this study can illustrate a variety of richer and deeper perspectives.

The Data in this study were collected through several main methods. First, in-depth interviews are conducted using semi-structured interview guidelines, which allow flexibility in exploring participants' experiences. The interview aims to understand first-hand how employees feel the influence of the work environment on their well-being. Second, this study also uses focus group discussion (FGD), where small groups of 5-7 employees discuss topics related to research. These discussions help identify a collective perspective on the impact of the work environment on health. In addition, observations were made to directly observe the conditions of the work environment, social interaction between employees, and their behavior in the face of work pressure. These observations help researchers gain a more objective understanding of the reality at work. Finally, documentation is used as supporting data, such as company policies regarding occupational health, employee health reports, or other relevant documents. The combination of various data collection techniques aims to improve the validity of research results.

After the data were collected, the analysis was carried out using thematic analysis (thematic analysis), which identifies the main patterns and themes that arise from interview and observations. The Data were then categorized based on aspects related to the influence of the work environment on employee health. In addition, the study also applied narrative analysis, which focuses on the stories of individuals regarding their experiences in facing challenges in the work environment. This analysis allows researchers to understand how those experiences evolve over time and how employees interpret their experiences. To ensure the reliability of the findings, this study applies data triangulation, which is by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure consistency in research findings. In this way, research can provide a more accurate and holistic picture of the relationship between the work environment and employee health.

The validity of the data in qualitative research is essential to ensure that the results obtained are reliable. Several steps are taken to maintain the validity of the data. First, triangulation methods are applied using various data collection techniques, such as interviews, observations, and documentation, to ensure that research results do not only come from one source of information. Second, member checking is done by asking participants to review the results of their interviews to ensure that the researcher's interpretation is in accordance with their experience. This step is important so that there are no errors in the meaning of the data. In addition, this study also applies audit trail, which is the recording of the entire research process in detail to maintain transparency and accountability. With the audit trail, all stages of the research can be reconstructed if necessary, thus increasing the credibility of the research. By applying this approach, the study is expected to provide deep insights and contribute to understanding how the work environment affects the physical and mental health of employees.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The following are the results of interviews that have been analyzed to understand the influence of the work environment on the mental and physical health of employees. These interviews describe the subjective experiences of employees from different positions and industry sectors, thus providing a more comprehensive insight into the conditions in the workplace.

The impact of the work environment on Mental Health

Respondent 1 (administrative employee, 30 years old):

"High work pressure often makes me feel anxious. The targets to be achieved are sometimes unrealistic, and superiors do not always provide enough support. I feel stressed and have trouble sleeping because I keep thinking about work."

Respondent 2 (Production Supervisor, 35 years old):

"I feel mentally exhausted from having to supervise so many things at once. In addition, the competitive working atmosphere makes me often feel depressed. I wish there was more open communication so the workload could be more evenly distributed."

Respondent 3 (Customer Service, 28 years old):

"The working environment here is very dynamic, but sometimes the excessive demands of the customers make me feel pressured. Some colleagues also experience burnout due to pressure from superiors to always provide the best service without considering our well-being."

Impact of the work environment on physical health

Respondent 4 (Machine Operator, 40 years old):

"I often have back pain due to a non-ergonomic working position. Long working hours and lack of rest also make my body tired easily."

Respondent 5 (cashier, 25 years old):

"I often feel achy because I have to stand for a long time. In addition, the hectic working atmosphere makes me rarely have time for a quiet meal break."

Respondent 6 (IT staff, 32 years old):

"I spend almost all my working time in front of a computer screen. As a result, I often have headaches and eye strain. I wish the company could provide more supportive facilities, such as ergonomic chairs or a more flexible rest schedule."

Factors that worsen or improve the health of employees

Respondent 7 (HR Manager, 38 years old):

"We recognize that a good work environment is very influential on the well-being of employees. Therefore, we strive to provide wellness programs, such as counseling sessions and stress management training. However, the main challenge is how to make employees feel comfortable to use these facilities without fear of being judged weak."

Respondent 8 (Marketing employee, 27 years old):

"The factor that helped me stay healthy at work the most was the support from colleagues. We often share our experiences and encourage each other. However, I also feel that there needs to be a clearer policy regarding work and personal life balance so that employees' mental health is better maintained."

Thematic analysis of the interview

Based on the interview, some of the main themes that emerged were:

High work pressure → many employees experience stress due to large workloads and high expectations.

Lack of support from superiors → some respondents feel less supported in the face of work pressure.

Physical impact of work → poor working posture, long working hours, and lack of rest contribute to physical health problems.

The importance of Social Support → supportive co-workers being a helpful factor in reducing stress.

Lack of support facilities → many employees want better facilities to support their well-being at work.

This study reveals that the work environment has a significant impact on the mental and physical health of employees. The results of in-depth interviews and observations show that factors such as work pressure, social interactions in the workplace, and company facilities and policies play a role in shaping employee well-being.

The impact of the work environment on Mental Health

The results of the interviews showed that most employees experience high levels of stress due to excessive workload and pressure to achieve tight targets. Respondents from various departments revealed that the lack of support from superiors as well as the ever-increasing demands on work led to anxiety and mental exhaustion. Some employees report experiencing sleep disturbances and difficulty in maintaining a balance between work and personal life. In addition, the competitive work environment is also a contributing factor to increased psychological stress, especially for employees in managerial and customer service positions. However, not all work environment impacts are negative. Some respondents stated that having supportive co-workers can help reduce stress. Social support from colleagues is considered a very influential factor in maintaining mental health, especially when employees face high workloads. In

addition, company policies that provide work flexibility are also considered to help reduce psychological pressure.

Impact of the work environment on physical health

In addition to the psychological impact, the study also found that the physical condition of employees is influenced by work environment factors. Employees who work in a sitting position for a long time, such as administrative staff and employees in the field of Information Technology, report experiencing back pain and eye strain due to the lack of ergonomic facilities. Meanwhile, workers who have to stand for long periods of time, such as cashiers and production operators, often experience muscle fatigue and joint pain. In addition, dense work patterns also hinder employees' rest periods, so they often skip meals or consume fast food due to time constraints. Some employees also revealed that noise and air pollution in the work environment affect their comfort, especially for those who work in the industrial and public service sectors.

Supporting and inhibiting factors of Employee Health

Some of the factors found can worsen or improve the well-being of employees in the workplace. Aggravating factors include the high workload, lack of support from management, as well as the limitation of comfortable work facilities. In contrast, factors that help improve employee well-being include workplace welfare policies, such as flexible working hours, employee counseling programs, and harmonious working relationships between employees. From these findings, it can be concluded that a healthy work environment is not only related to physical aspects, but also to the psychological well-being of employees. Therefore, more proactive efforts are needed from companies in creating a work environment that supports the balance between job demands and employee health.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the work environment has a significant impact on the mental and physical health of employees. Factors such as high work pressure, lack of social support, as well as the physical condition of the workplace contribute to stress, fatigue, and other health disorders. Social support from colleagues and flexible company policies are proven to reduce these negative impacts, improve employee well-being, and create a healthier and more productive work environment. Therefore, companies need to optimize welfare policies, improve working conditions, and encourage a supportive work culture to improve employee welfare and performance in a sustainable manner.

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