

## **JOB STRESS AMONG HOME CARE WORKERS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A CASE STUDY IN MALAYSIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The Corona Virus disease or Covid-19 pandemic outbreak has transformed new lifestyle of mankind across the globe. Triggered by anxiety, irritated and angry created by public have brought up a new norms construct by government and healthcare professionals which public need to be followed. However the new norms somehow create a stress among home care workers. During the Covid-19 pandemic, an adequate workforce including home care requires staffing in a number of areas which requires maximizing ability to care for a maximized number of elderly and limited scare physical and human skill and experience resources. The risks exposure of lifestyle, extra workloads, emotion due to new norms applied in normal work, limited scare resources of skill and experience should required a good organization effectiveness and efficiency management organization. The social stress theory describes a mediator in the relationship of social structure and crisis of this pandemic and how risks leverage among individuals (Stoddard, 2009). Data were analyzed to describe self-reported activities of home care as they interacted with 20 elderly and 25 caregivers in Home Care in Klang Valley. The subjective portions of reports were analyzed to identify concerns described by elderly to home care workers. In the end, this study will list psychosocial shield and psychological preparation by caregiver to overcome job stress due to limited scare resources and mental health problem of home care workers.*

Key words: Covid-19 pandemic, new norms, practices, psychological preparation.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

This study begin with factors contribute to stress in home care activities during pandemic, facing the pandemic in home care activities, social stress theory, factors contribute to job stress among home care worker, limited resource among low income home care and mental health among home care workers. Methodology of studies, qualitative data, interviews outcome, the new practices in managing job stress for home care workers and finally the conclusion.

### **FACING THE PANDEMIC IN HOME CARE ACTIVITIES**

A good organization practices in terms of efficiency and effectiveness should be applied in managing scare physical resources and scare skill and experience resources in home care. Hands on training, briefing and demonstration on new rules and regulation need to be layout to home care workers in adapting the new norms (Ebrahim, 2020). Educating elderly and their circle of influences including family and friends would carry out a successful plan of action. Stress actually weakens the immune system and disturbs the body's ability to battle the infection (Ebrahim, 2020).

### **THE CAUSED OF STRESS DURING AND AFTER PANDEMIC COVID-19 IN HOME CARE WORKERS**

The changed of normal daily life of home care workers led to the significant stress on healthcare workers. These including the staffed including caregivers and healthcare professional have caused the over-worked risk exposure of lifestyle, extra workloads, and emotion due to new norms applied in normal work (Burdorf, 2020). These effects should be absorbed by the home care workers especially the caregivers to ensure the circle of influences does not delegates the stress around the members in home care.

### **FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO STRESS IN HOME CARE ACTIVITIES DURING PANDEMIC**

The new norms or normal practices during pandemic and post-pandemic have abruptly changed the normal daily life of an elderly in home care industry. The strain on the healthcare system has led to a significant stress on healthcare workers including home care workers due to new preparation and setting of home care. The change lead to short-staffed including caregivers, home care workers including healthcare professional caused the over-worked. The adequate workforce requires new staffing arrangement to maximizing professional's ability to care for a high volume of elderly or elderly patients. This including the risk exposure of lifestyle, extra workloads, and emotion due to new norms applied in normal work, limited scare resources of skill and experience. The environmental creates anxiety, uncertain and doubt among family members to the environmental of home care. Fines and punishment imposed by the government will enforce the public for psychological preparation. In the end this study will list psychological preparation to overcome the job stress of home care workers (Khoo & Lantos, April 2020).

## **SOCIAL STRESS THEORY**

The social stress theory describes a mediator in the relationship of social structure and crisis and how structured risks become actualized in the lives of individuals (Stoddard, 2009). It creates stressful consequences of social organization and the stressful background of mental disorder due to the new normal. How structured risks become actualized in the lives of individuals as stressful experiences? This study measures two (2) variables of the social distribution of stress and social variation in response to stress. The self-efficacy as a mediator between social position and stress; and the intersection of stress processes in occupational area, upon gender stratification (Aneshensel, 1992; Jerusalem, 1995; Song, 2020).

## **FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO JOBSTRESS AMONG HOME CARE WORKER**

Home care workers including health professionals must deal with decisions in allocating scarce resources that cause moral distress and affect the mental health of home care workers and elderly. Everyone must deal with restrictions on freedom of movement that have shut down whole economies in an attempt to flatten the epidemic curve. Two (2) major factors contribute to job stress among home care workers is limited resource among unaffordable home care and mental health among home care workers (Makhbul, April, 2020).

### **1. LIMITED RESOURCE AMONG LOW INCOME HOME CARE**

The unaffordable home care organization may force into poverty due to new hygiene practices required effective hand washing and physical distancing will increase the job stress of caregivers and increase the overheads (Mills, 2020). These include the increased cost of operation, medication treatment and drug. A financial limit on our efforts is to save lives of elderly and home care worker whereas resources need to maximize the benefits and minimize overheads due to new norms. As the pandemic evolves, preferential treatment for home care workers who risk their lives as front liners may be justifiable. The society has to support elderly who risk their own health for protecting the other circle of influences including home care workers (Khoo & Lantos, April 2020).

### **2. MENTAL HEALTH AMONG HOME CARE WORKERS**

Among the home care workers, women were reported has higher levels of severe mental health symptoms compared to man in symptoms of depression, anxiety, and psychological distress (Ayanian, 2020; Özdemir, 2020). Many factors are contributing to the psychological distress of health care workers providing direct care to elderly such as the emotional strain. Be concerned about infecting family members who are infected with Covid-19 from workplace exposures, especially older family members. The shortages of physical healthcare resources and other necessary medical equipment were contributed in the mental health stress. There are limited professional healthcare for managing depression, anxiety, and psychological distress to provide acute care for elderly with or without COVID-19. To sustain and restore healthcare workers, health care organizations will need to monitor the mental health outcomes of health care workers over time and prioritize the mental and physical health needs and recovery of individuals caring for patients with COVID-19 (Ayanian, 2020).

## **METHODOLOGY**

Data were analyzed to describe self-reported activities of home care workers as they interacted with 20 elderly and 25 caregivers from 25 homecare within Klang Valley area. Among the activities assigned to caregivers as compulsory duties on a daily basis were listening and responding, interaction with participant (socialization), providing physical comfort, providing spiritual comfort and information exchange. Content analysis of volunteer visit reports were completed over six (6) months to identify the new rules and regulation, task, duties and responsibilities of home care work in Klang Valley which contributes to occupational stressors. The study describes the new sources of stress arising from COVID-19 crisis. Results feature the analysis of both elderly's (n = 20) and caregivers narratives (n = 25) to ensure that the home care has been managed effectively and efficiently. Home care structures and culture are implicated in the lack of progress to address home care workers' mental health problems. Policy change should focus on compensation, healthier work conditions, and training requirements. Data and records of 20 elderly and 25 caregivers from 25 homecare within Klang Valley area has been retrieved from the database of Kementerian Pembangunan Wanita, Keluarga dan Masyarakat.

## **QUALITATIVE DATA**

The qualitative data obtained from focus groups is to identify concerns described by elderly to home care workers. The result of the concern will list psychological preparation made by the caregiver to overcome the job stress of home care workers and opportunity to explore aspects of job stress. There are 20 elderly and 25 caregivers in Home Care in Klang Valley. The focus group were between 45-74 years old. Interview the 20 elderly and 25 caregivers of home care caregivers in Home Care in Klang Valley. Total of one (1) hour information from interview were obtained and verified by the operator through registration documentations. The operator or the owner permit to record the discussions and then made verbatim transcriptions. Data were analyzed using qualitative content thematic analysis. This approach suitable for qualitative descriptive studies, as it draws on the tenets of naturalistic inquiry (Sandelowski, 2010). The aims of the focus groups were to determine psychological preparation made by the caregiver to overcome job stress. These will have an impact on the physiology, psychology and behaviour, recognize what stress looks like, take steps to build the resilience and manage job stress, and know where to go if required assistance.

## **INTERVIEWS OUTCOME**

The interview explains that the focus groups have determined psychological preparation made by the caregiver to overcome the job stress which have an impact on the physiology, psychology and behaviour, recognize what stress looks like, take steps to build your resilience and manage job stress, and know where to go if you need help (Özdemir, 2020).

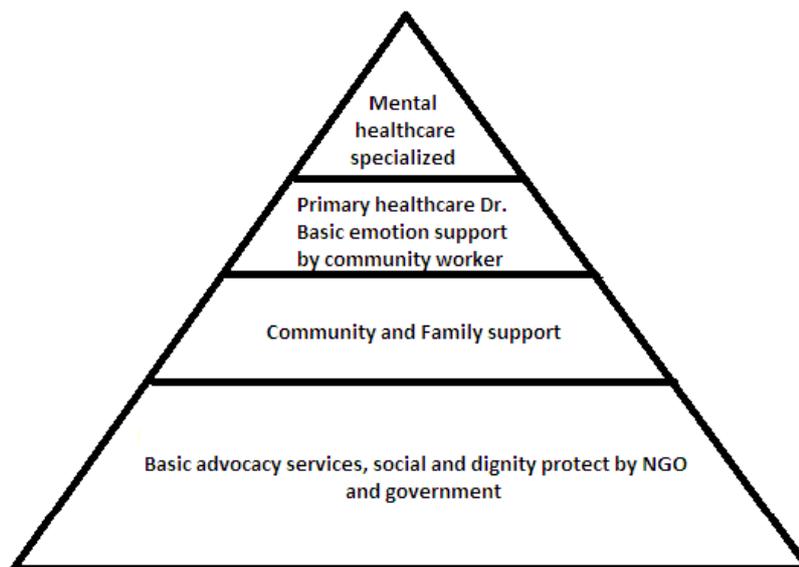
1. Admit own strength - they must accept their capability and their company or organization capability, admit own strengths and weaknesses, and accept that life has its ups and downs. This principle is able to form members who are more confident about overcoming future challenges.
2. Home care workers must adopt a psychology of change, with regard to personal growth and development. An open attitude, and readiness to accept new knowledge and experiences can steer them to excellence.
3. Home care workers need to aware with fact of life. The paradigm shift and mental improvement about their life will evoke the feeling that life is truly meaningful.
4. Home care workers must be psychologically sensitive to environment. The environment always influence human life, but now mentality of members needs to be change so they able to influence surroundings.
5. Home care workers exceptional the professional healthcare should be knowledgeable in areas of managing job stress and basic healthcare including the first aids and emergency treatment in handling early symptoms.
6. Home care workers have to realize the importance of the social psychology aspect. To obtain a strong sense of social psychology starts with positive personal relationships this will create a harmonious atmosphere. The ability to believe, to love and to support others (spouse, children, parents and colleagues) is an important input for the individual's consolidation of social psychology. The worry and stress need to be handled properly to help individuals produce reactions to protect themselves and increase self-discipline. The cooperation and unity of every party and layer of society are needed to control stress and to curb this virus (Makhbul, April, 2020).

## **THE NEW PRACTISES IN MANAGING JOBSTRESS FOR HOME CARE WORKERS**

This study has distinguished type of stress, build resilience, and manage job stress and resources of managing stress Chesak (2019) show that excessive stress can cause failure in an individual's mental and physical systems, which will have an impact on the physiology, psychology and behavior. Chesak also states that stress weakens the immune system and disturbs the body's ability to battle the infection. Stress trigger stress in other people those who do not seem to be concerned about the danger of Covid-19, despite of fines and punishment could be used to stubbornness (Makhbul, April, 2020). During this pandemic, it is critical that you recognize what stress looks like, take steps to build your resilience and manage job stress, and know where to go if you need help. Makhbul (2020) identify five (5) psychological shield treated as a solution for home care workers whereas WHO (2020) has listed mental health and psychosocial support during and post covid-19 which compliment with the psychological shield.

## **PSYCHOSOCIAL SHIELD**

WHO (2020) stress that the term Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) refers to internal or external support aims to protect psychosocial well-being to treat mental disorders. The interventions in health, education, or interventions that are community-based cover social problems, emotional distress, depression and severe mental disorders to improve the well-being of individuals, protect mental health and psychosocial wellbeing during pandemic. It helps individuals and communities to heal the psychological effect and rebuild social structures after pandemic. Psychosocial refers to closed relationship between individual and home healthcare workers. It prevents and treats psychiatric disorders such as depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. WHO (2020) identify that the delivery of MHPSS services to all level of elderly involved in the pandemic is follows the Basic Principle of Triangle as shown in figure 1 below. WHO (2020) identify four (4) layers of mental health and psychosocial support provided to elderly from basic services by NGO and government; followed by restoration of community and family support; restoring basic emotion support and finally monitored by mental healthcare specialized. Below explains the model of MHPSS role in each level of need.



**Figure 1: Basic Principle of Triangle for mental health and psychosocial support by Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC)**

**PSYCHOLOGICAL PREPARATIONS**

Makhbul, (2020) identify that Covid-19 virus triggered stress causing varying reactions like sadness, worry, confusion and fear in society, which assume the shortages psychological needs especially those who are staying far from family and friends. For the caregivers in home care who take care of elderly, the stress level surely stronger as they exposed directly to the life-threatening virus. The panic situation in society show that excessive stress can cause failure in an individual’s mental and physical systems, which will have an impact on the physiology, psychology and behavior (Makhbul, April, 2020). The psychological preparation of elderly and home care workers involves how everyone in the group of the home care distinguishes those outside the group. The home healthcare has to improve occupational safety and health procedures so that the confidence of every member in interacting with visitors or outsiders can be renewed. Every member in the organization must make five psychological preparations.

- i. They must accept themselves and admit their own strengths and weaknesses, and accept the fact that life has its ups and downs. This will form more confident members about overcoming future challenges.
- ii. The members must adopt a psychology of change where an open attitude, and readiness to accept new knowledge and experiences.
- iii. Aware of the needs of paradigm shift which suggest the feeling of meaningful in their life.
- iv. A psychologically sensitive to the environment even though environment was always said to be influencing human life, but in different approach members needs to be changed so they will believe they are able to influence their surroundings.
- v. The significant of social psychology aspect in obtaining a strong sense of positive personal relationships which will create a harmonious atmosphere.

Social psychology begins from ability to believe, love and support others member of the family. Stress need to be handled in order to assist individuals to produce reactions to protect themselves and increase self-discipline. Cooperation and unity among family and society are needed to control stress. Table 1 below will list the psychosocial shield and psychological preparations in Cause of Stress, Resilience, Manage job stress and Resources of stress.

**Table 1: Managing Stress by home care workers**

No	Cause of Stress	Resilience	Manage job stress	Resources
1	Limited resources	Admit own strength and weaknesses	Volunteer represent by society should support elderly with services	Volunteer, Helper and unpaid workers
2	Mental health	The members must adopt a psychology of change	Paradigm shift in mental improvement about life	Psychiatric nurses, mental health professionals
3	Body health	The members must adopt a physiology of change	Paradigm shift in daily activities preparation	Health knowledge and awareness
4	Behavior change	Psychologically sensitive to	Fines and punishment	New rules and

		the environment		regulation
5	Downturn economic and recession	Fact that life has its ups and downs	Preparation new setting and procedure of home care	Expertise in economic and entrepreneurship
6	Trend in real world	Confident overcoming future challenges	Brainstorming the marketing strategy and challenges	Expertise in economic and entrepreneurship
7	Trend in population health	Confident overcoming future challenges	Paradigm shift in daily activities preparation	Psychiatric nurses, mental health professionals
8	Un affordable of home care organization facing short-staffed caused over-worked	Adopt a psychology and physiology of change. Need to put more effort, values and hardworking	Managing organization resources and effective resource management	Resources and overheads. Government grants and funding
9	Feeling down or emotional strain	Workers need to be aware of the fact and the meaning of life	love and support others consolidation of social psychology	Psychological support by CHV
10	Psychologically sensitive to work environment	Change to influence their surroundings	Influencing human psychologically and mentality of workers needs to be changed	Psychologically influencing by CHV
11	New home care structures and culture	Adopt a psychology of change	Address home care workers' mental health problems	Home care structures and culture
12	Short-staffed caused over-worked	Restrictions on freedom of movement	Effective and Efficient scare resources management	Healthier work conditions and environment
13	New norms applied in normal work creates emotion	Understanding the rational needs of new norms	Briefing on new rules and regulation. Compensation to home care workers	In house training by professional
14	Environmental creates anxiety, uncertain and doubt among family members	Adopt a psychology of change	Social psychology with positive personal relationships	Briefing and demonstration by professional

## CONCLUSION

The new norms in normal work creates job stress to home care workers. During the pandemic Covid-19, an adequate workforce including home care requires staffing in a number of areas which requires maximizing ability to care for a maximized number of elderly and limited scare physical and human skill and experience resources would be the main factor contributing to job stress. The risks exposure of lifestyle, extra workloads, and emotion due to new norms applied in normal work, limited scare resources of skill and experience should require a good organization effectiveness and efficiency management organization. Building resilience from challenges in accepting new norms applied in normal work required, a psychological and physiology of change, psychologically sensitive could influence their surroundings, social psychology aspect in creating a harmonious atmosphere. Self-efficacy or individual's confidence in their ability to engage in social interactional tasks is necessary to initiate and maintain interpersonal relationships. Self-efficacy would be as a mediator between social position and stress. This study will list the build resilience from managing job stress with resources to overcome cause of stress. This study will list psychological preparation by the CHV, caregiver and professional.

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