



**Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development**

**EXPLORING JOB STRESS AMONG HOME CARE WORKERS  
DURING COVID-19**

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(Human Resource Development)  
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## **ABSTRACT**

### **EXPLORING JOB STRESS AMONG HOME CARE WORKERS DURING COVID-19**

#### **PANDEMIC**

**SHARIFAH NURHAFIZAH BINTI WAN ALWIE**

The Corona Virus illness, also known as Covid-19, has changed mankind's way of life across the world. The new standards are causing tension among home care workers. Therefore, this study was conducted to explore job stress among home care workers during COVID-19 pandemic. Factors of job stress, individual, and organizational strategies and influence of job stress among home care workers differs from one person to another. There were 5 informants who participated in this study. This study involved 3 home care facilities in Kuching, Sarawak which are Jasper Lodge Kuching, Premier Nursing Home and Eden on the Park Nursing Care Residence. There are 4 research questions were structured based on objective as the interview guideline for data collection through semi-structured interview and focus group discussion. Content analysis was conducted to answer the research questions and produce the final result of the report. The findings showed that there were various factors of job stress experienced by the home care employees during this pandemic. Based on the findings, it showed that both individual and organizational were aware of job stress issue during this pandemic. They had implemented some strategies to overcome the issue. The findings also showed the influence of job stress to the home care workers' job productivity. At the end of this study, it can be concluded that this research meets all research objectives which were suggested previously.

**Keywords:** Job stress, home care workers, COVID-19

## **ABSTRAK**

### **KAJIAN TERHADAP TEKanan KERJA DALAM KALANGAN PEKERJA RUMAH JAGAAN**

**SHARIFAH NURHAFIZAH BINTI WAN ALWIE**

*Penyakit Corona Virus, juga dikenali sebagai COVID-19, telah mengubah cara hidup manusia di seluruh dunia. Norma baru telah mengakibatkan tekanan pekerjaan dalam kalangan pekerja rumah jagaan. Oleh itu, kajian ini dilakukan untuk mengenalpasti tekanan pekerjaan di kalangan pekerja rumah jagaan semasa COVID-19. Faktor tekanan kerja, strategi individu dan organisasi serta pengaruh tekanan kerja di kalangan pekerja penjagaan rumah berbeza dari satu orang ke orang lain. Terdapat 5 orang informan yang mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini. Kajian ini melibatkan 3 rumah jagaan di Kuching, Sarawak iaitu Jasper Lodge Kuching, Premier Nursing Home dan Eden on the Park Nursing Care Residence. Terdapat 4 soalan kajian telah dibentuk berdasarkan objektif kajian sebagai panduan temuduga untuk proses pengumpulan data melalui temu bual separa struktur. Analisis kandungan telah dijalankan untuk menjawab soalan kajian dan menghasilkan keputusan akhir laporan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa terdapat pelbagai faktor tekanan kerja yang dialami oleh pekerja penjagaan rumah semasa wabak ini. Mereka telah menerapkan beberapa strategi untuk mengatasi masalah ini. Hasil kajian juga menunjukkan pengaruh tekanan kerja terhadap produktiviti pekerjaan pekerja penjagaan rumah. Pada akhir kajian ini, dapat disimpulkan bahawa penyelidikan ini memenuhi semua objektif kajian yang telah disarankan sebelumnya.*

Kata kunci: Tekanan pekerjaan, pekerja rumah jagaan, COVID-19

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

### **1.2 Background of Study**

In this modern age of competence, job stress is a very critical problem in the workplace. That's why this study will concentrate extensively on the causes and effect of job stress and work stress management strategies.

In the past study, study on job stress are mostly linked with employee job performance at workplace (Vijayan, 2018). Job stress impact on employee turnover intention. However, results from past research by Arshadi and Damiri (2013) indicate that there are negative relationship between job stress and job performance and positive relationship between job stress and turnover intention.

In order to manage job stress at workplace, both employer and employee need to take action so that this issue can be reduced. Stress management study by Malaysian scholar focused more on the individual steps taken by the employee to manage job stress. There are some researchers has conducted a study on job stress by considering our current situation which is Covid-19 pandemic. In a study conducted by Muhammad Najib Ali and Ahmad (2020), home care workers can manage their stress by using some steps such as adapt with the current environment and situation.

Past research about job stress are more focusing on education sector. It is proven by studies conducted by writers such as Florian Klapproth, Federkeil, Franziska Heinschke, & Jungmann (2020). They conducted a study on teacher's experiences of stress and their coping strategies during Covid-19 which focuses more on the teacher rather than home care workers.

Although there are quite numbers of past scholars did research about job stress and stress management, however there are least of researchers that conduct a study related with our current situation which is Covid-19. Therefore, this study is conducted to exploring the job stress among home care workers during this pandemic Covid-19.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Research on job stress during Covid-19 have been focus more on public sector such education sector compared to current research that focus more on home care sector. Not only that, research on job stress during Covid-19 among home care workers are mostly conducted in western context. For example, Sterling and his friends (2020) has conducted a study on job stress experience in New York city. Therefore, this study is conducted in Malaysia.

In addition, past related research are mostly conducted quantitatively but this research is conducted qualitatively. This is proven by research written by Florian Klapproth, Federkeil, Franziska Heinschke, & Jungmann, 2020. Quantitative data have lack of data accuracy compared to qualitative data since it focus more in-depth questions about that topic. Research by Muhammad Najib Ali & Ahmad (2020) focuses more on the individual strategies while in this study, the researcher focuses on both individual and organizational strategies.

In conclusion, this study intends to explore job stress from the perspective of home care workers during Covid-19 pandemic. Hence, this study will be conducted to close the gaps from previous study.

### **1.4 Objectives of Study**

#### **1.4.1 General Objective**

The main objective of this study is to explore the job stress among home care workers during Covid-19 pandemic.

### 1.4.2 Specific Objectives

- i. To investigate the factors that lead to job stress among home care workers during COVID-19 pandemic.
- ii. To identify individual strategies in managing job stress during COVID-19 pandemic.
- iii. To identify organizational strategies in managing job stress during COVID-19 pandemic.
- iv. To investigate the influence of job stress to home care workers' productivity during Covid-19.

### 1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the factors that lead to job stress among home care workers during Covid-19 pandemic?
2. What are the individual strategies use in managing job stress?
3. What are the organizational strategies use in managing job stress?
4. What is the influence of job stress to the home care workers' job productivity during Covid-19 pandemic?

### 1.6 Definition of Term

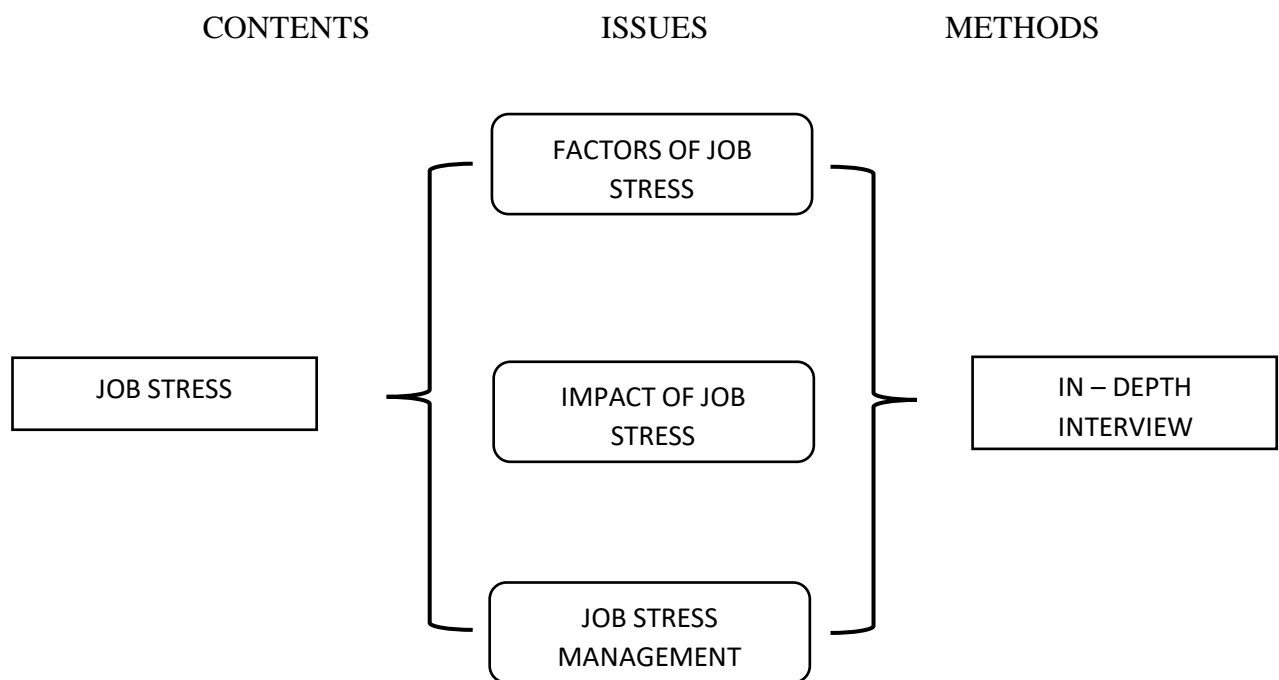
Job Stress	Person's interaction with job-related elements that disturb or improve his or her psychological and physiological state (Beer and Newman,1978)
Stress Management	Designed to help people manage with stresses and the unpleasant emotions, physiological arousal, and/or health

	effects that these stressors cause. (Dianna Theadora Kenny, 2007)
--	---

*Table 1.0 Definition of Term*

## 1.7 Research Framework

Research framework is an outline that navigate the action in qualitative approach. According to Rusli Ahmad (2014), research framework is a categories of outputs that research be produce. Thus, this study provides related research framework that outline the research descriptions and outputs in figure below.



*Figure 1.0 Research Framework*

## **1.8 Significance of Study**

The outcomes of this study can be used by the other researchers as a reference in conducting the new research in other related findings. Not only that, this study also helped the HR practitioner create initiative to develop training module that related to job stress awareness at workplace but in their perspective. This study also will initiate the future researchers to have their interest in exploring job related stress in others perspective.

## **1.9 Limitation of Study**

There are some challenges or limitation in conducting this study. The data that collected in this study might be not accurate which will result to ineffective data. This also will result on the accuracy of achieved research objectives. In addition, by considering the current situation which the new norms because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the researcher has lack of resources to get the information regards this study. This is because some of the the organization have to avoid physical interaction. The time taken to complete the interview also limited since the interview minimize the number of informants and the data.

## **1.10 Summary**

In conclusion, the are some components discussed in this chapter. The components are background of study, problem statement, objective of study, research question, definition of term, research framework, significance of study and limitation of study.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The degree to which you feel stressed or unable to cope with uncontrollable pressure can be described as stress. The term stress was used for the first time by the “father of stress” which is Hans Selye. In a research proposed by George Fink in 2010, Hans Selye began his stress research when he was a medical student in 1926. He observed that patients with multiple diseases have many of the same "non-specific" symptoms. This is the body's general response to stress stimuli.

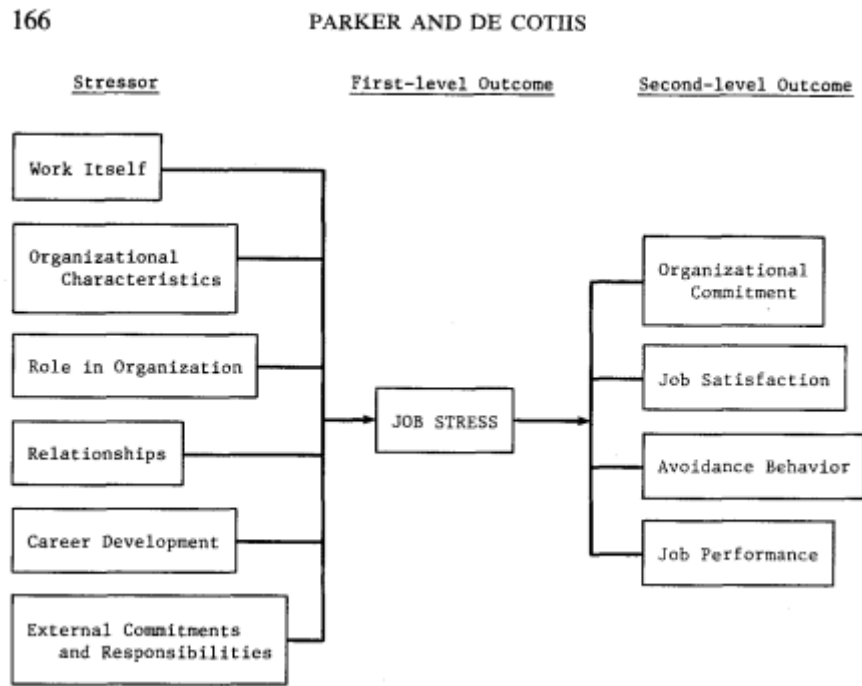
In this chapter, the literature review will be discussed to gain a deeper understanding of the research. Literature reviews are mainly surveys of academic articles, books and other resources. These resources are relevant and can be used to conduct research on specific issues, research areas, summaries of each work, and important assessments.

In this section, it includes the discussion of the Covid-19, concept of job stress, factors of job stress, stress management strategies and past research on job stress at workplace.

#### **2.2 Concept of Job Stress**

Job stress is the adverse emotional and physical reactions that occur when the work specifications do not fit the employee's skills, resources, or needs. According to Kahn and Byosiene (1992), there are three agreement of job stress. The first one is the effect of external stimuli arises from work stress (stressor). Second, work stress requires the personal assessment of external stimuli (appraisal). The last one is mental, emotional, physical and/or behavioral functioning is adversely affected by work stress (strain).

Parker and DeCotiis (1983) in their past research had presented their job stress model. In the model, they categorized all the stressors into six categories together with the level of outcomes.



*Figure 2.0 Model of Job stress by Parker and Decotiis (1983)*

This model does not use individual differences become the moderator of stress and stressor relationship.

### 2.3 Factors of Job Stress Among Home Care Workers

The new norms that were established by the government has create a stress among home care workers. A sufficient workforce, including home care, needs staffing in a variety of areas during the Covid-19 pandemic, which includes optimizing the capacity to care for a maximized number of elderly and restricted physical and human skills and experience capital.

In early 2020, Sterling and friends has conducted a study in title “Experiences of Home Care Workers in New York during Covid-19”. The informants from this research stated that they faced new challenges because they handle patients that have Covid-19 symptoms (Sterling

et al., 2020). Some of the participants also went to the grocery and pharmacy on the patient's behalf, which increased their own risk for contracting Covid-19 (Sterling et al., 2020).

In 2018, Mathagi Vijayan conducted a study on "Impact of job stress on employees job performance in Aavin, Coimbatore. This study was conducted quantitatively. There are different kinds of job stress prevailing in an employee's everyday life like workload, job security, autonomy, role conflicts, low salaries etc (Vijayan, 2018).

According to Makhbul (2020), there are two major factors that contribute to job stress among home care workers which is limited resource among unaffordable home care and mental health among home care workers.

Because of modern hygiene practices needed effective hand washing and physical distance, the unaffordable home care organization will drive into poverty will increase the job burden of caregivers and increase the overheads (Mills, 2020). This includes higher running costs, prescription and addiction treatment (Muhammad Najib Ali & Ahmad, 2020).

The second factor of job stated by Makhbul (2020) is mental health among the home care workers. Women have been reported to have higher levels of serious mental health symptoms in symptoms of depression, anxiety, and psychological distress among home care staff compared to men (Ayanian, 2020; Özdemir, 2020). Several factors contribute to the psychological distress of health care workers providing direct care to elderly people, such as the emotional burden.

## **2.4 Stress Management Strategies**

Stress management strategy is a technique that used to reduce the level of stress especially chronic stress. It is important that we understand what stress looks like during this pandemic, take action to develop the resilience and handle job stress, and know where to go if

we need assistance. Makhbul (2020) describes five (5) psychological shields that are treated as a home care worker solution, while WHO (2020) identified mental wellbeing and psychosocial support during and after Covid-19.

The stress level is surely higher for caregivers in home care who take care of the elderly as they are directly exposed to the life-threatening virus. The panic situation in society shows that extreme stress in the mental and physical systems of a person can cause failure, which will have an effect on physiology, psychology and actions (Makhbul, April, 2020). The psychological training of elderly and home care staff includes how people outside the community are distinguished by everyone in the home care category. Occupational safety and health practices must be improved by home healthcare in order to renew the trust of each member in communicating with visitors or outsiders (Muhammad Najib Ali & Ahmad, 2020).

## **2.5 Transactional Model of Stress and Coping**

“Psychological stress is a specific interaction between the individual and the environment that is assessed by the person as demanding or surpassing his or her resources and jeopardising his or her well-being,” according to Lazarus and Folkman (1984). (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, p. 19). (1) Cognitive assessments and (2) coping are two essential steps in this connection.

The “process of classifying an encounter, and its different features, with relation to their relevance for well-being” is known as cognitive evaluation (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, p. 31). Indeed, before dealing with a circumstance, it must be appraised cognitively as potentially stressful. This assessment is made up of two cognitive mechanisms: primary and secondary appraisals.

“Cognitive and behavioural efforts to master, lessen, or accept the internal and/or external pressures produced by the stressful transaction” are referred to as coping (Folkman,

1984, p. 843; see also Folkman and Lazarus, 1980). Given the wide range of stress reactions, the majority of writers attempted to categorise them in useful ways (e.g., active versus passive or avoidant coping)

Coping, according to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), has two primary roles. The control of emotions or distresses that accompany a stressful circumstance is one of them (emotion-focused coping). The alternative is to immediately change the aspects of the stressful environment to manage the problem that is producing the stress (problem-focused coping).

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The methodology of this research and how to perform this research are discussed in this chapter. This chapter primarily covers study design, population and samples, data collection methods, data analysis, research instruments, ethics of research, validity and reliability, and conclusions of research.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

The research design used in this study exploratory research design. Exploratory research design is considered as the most suitable design to be used to gain insights and ideas in order to explore job stress among the home care workers. This design also quite flexible and less time consuming. Due to the flexibility of qualitative methods, this is the best way to solve all types of research questions (for example, what, why and how).

#### **3.3 Population and Sample**

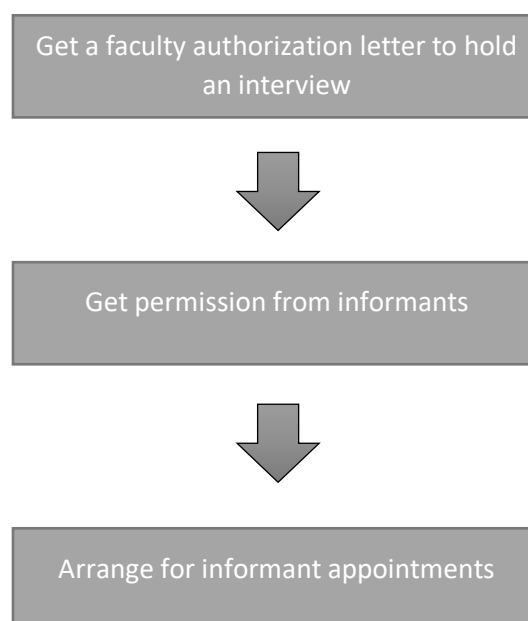
Marshall (1996) defines the term "population" as a complete set of elements in which all elements share an equal chance of being selected. In this study, the population of this study is home care workers in Kuching, Sarawak. The sample is from a group of people, including six informants from the home care service in Kuching, Sarawak. Informants are selected based on their job role and work experience. The experience depends on the number of years they have served as home care workers in that particular organization. Therefore, they participated in semi-structured interviews to collect data.

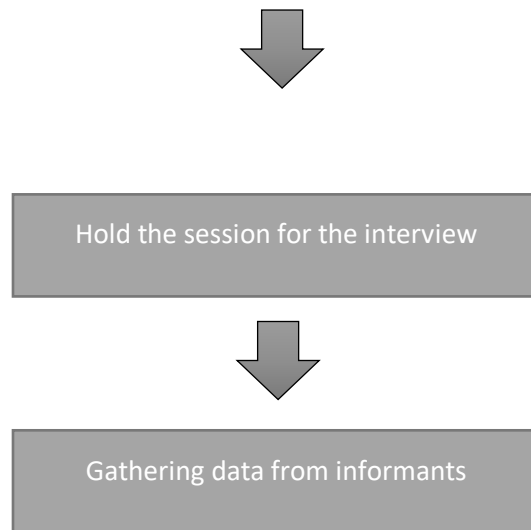
### 3.3.1 Purposive Sampling

In this study, the sampling technique that used was sampling technique. According to Tongco (2007), the method of purposeful sampling is a kind of non-probability sampling that is most useful when one wants to research a certain cultural area within which experienced experts are involved. A purposeful sampling is a non-probability sample which is chosen on the basis of a population characteristic and the study objective. In qualitative research, the most effective approach to use purposeful sampling is to survey respondents with a view to finding the right informants to provide the best response. This study targeted home care workers with those features that would be best for data collection.

### 3.4 Data Collection Technique

Before an interview was performed, there are few substantial steps were taken. The researcher received the faculty's approval letter and obtained the informants' consent. Therefore, after the permission of informants was received, the researcher arranged the informant appointments. Next, interviews with informants were executed, they asked permission from them. Therefore, it is possible to collect the final transcription results. The following figure shows the steps for the method of data collection using an interview as a guide.





*Figure 3.0 Data Collection Technique*

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

In order to evaluate the terms of the problems being discussed, the data obtained during the interview session were organized through data reduction and data cleaning. However, in this report, content analysis and conceptual analysis will be selected for data analysis. Next, the data were analysed by content analysis in qualitative data analysis processes, since it is the most suitable approach to be used for qualitative study. Through using this approach, the researcher was able to examine the information conveyed by each informant during the interview in written, verbal or visual contact messages.

Through extracting the informants, the data obtained were transcribed one by one. During the data analysis, the recording will be played again during the interview to ensure that the data was correctly analysed. Finally, the transcript of the interview with the informants were conducted in detail.

### **3.6 Research Instrument**

The study method that was used in this analysis was a semi-structured interview and focus group discussion. The interview guide was prepared for the researcher as personal guidance. In addition, with their permission, the researcher recorded the informants in audio