UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

PSYCHOSOCIAL AND PHYSICAL RISK FACTORS OF MENTAL HEALTH AMONG LABORATORY WORKERS IN A MALAYSIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

ZULIZA BINTI MD SAAD

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By

ZULIZA BINTI MD SAAD

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Chairman : Irniza binti Rasdi, PhD
Faculty : Medicine and Health Sciences

Mental health problems is a broad range disorders that lead to serious illness as a long-term effects if not addressed immediately. The aim of this study was to determine the prevalence and associated factors related to Probable Mental Health Problems of UPM laboratory workers. A cross-sectional study was carried out from January 2014 to June 2015. The workers were asked to complete a set of questionnaires, including background information, Job Content Questionnaire (JCQ-27), Sick Building Syndrome (SBS) and General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12). 264 laboratory workers completed the questionnaire. The prevalence of Probable Mental Health Problems of respondents was 28% and the prevalence of Sick Building Syndrome was 31.4%. At dry laboratories, mean temperature was significantly higher than wet laboratories ($p<0.032$). Higher temperature was significantly associated with higher GHQ scores ($p<0.017$). At wet laboratories, mean concentration of carbon monoxide was significantly higher than dry laboratories ($p<0.002$). Lower temperature ($p< 0.015$) and lower relative humidity ($p< 0.047$) were significantly associated with higher GHQ scores. The most frequent SBS was drowsiness (12.1%) followed by irritating and runny nose (8.3%), fatigue (7.6%) and headache (5.7%). Based on final model of multivariate analyses job insecurity (AOR 2.33; 95%CI 0.212- 0.867), high job demand (AOR 1.12; 95%CI 0.445-0.921), fatigue (AOR 0.94; 95%CI 0.162-1.425), drowsiness (AOR 0.75; 95%CI 1.023-4.647) and household income (AOR 0.34; 95%CI 0.166-0.995) were predictors of Probable Mental Health Problems among the respondents. In conclusion, there were associations between socio-demographic, psychosocial factors and SBS with mental health status among UPM laboratory workers. Hence, further assessment should be carried out to reduce the risk factors that occur in laboratory working environment.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

FAKTOR PSIKOSOSIAL DAN FIZIKAL TERHADAP RISIKO KESIHATAN MENTAL DI KALANGAN PEKERJA MAKMAL DI UNIVERSITI AWAM MALAYSIA

Oleh

ZULIZA BINTI MD SAAD

Januari 2017

Pengerusi : Irniza binti Rasdi, PhD
Fakulti : Perubatan dan Sains Kesihatan

Masalah kesihatan mental merupakan rangkaian yang luas yang membawa kepada kesan penyakit yang serius dalam jangka panjang jika tidak ditangani dengan segera. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk menentukan prevalens dan faktor-faktor yang berkaitan dengan Kemungkinan Masalah Kesihatan Mental dikalangan pekerja makmal di UPM. Satu kajian keratan rentas telah dijalankan dari Januari 2014 hingga Jun 2015. Para pekerja diminta untuk melengkapkan soal selidik, termasuk maklumat latar belakang, Job Content Questionnaire (JCQ-27), Sick Building Syndrome (SBS) dan General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12). 264 pekerja makmal telah melengkapkan soal selidik. Prevalens Kemungkinan Masalah Kesihatan Mental dikalangan responden adalah 28% dan prevalens Sindrom Sakit Bangunan adalah 31.4%. Di makmal kering, suhu purata adalah lebih tinggi daripada makmal basah ($p < 0.032$). Suhu yang lebih tinggi dikaitkan dengan skor GHQ yang lebih tinggi ($p < 0.017$). Di makmal basah, kepekatan karbon monoksida adalah jauh lebih tinggi daripada makmal kering ($p < 0.002$). Suhu yang lebih rendah ($p < 0.015$) dan kelembapan relatif yang lebih rendah ($p < 0.047$) dikaitkan dengan dengan skor GHQ yang lebih tinggi. SBS yang paling kerap adalah mengantuk (12.1%) diikuti oleh kegatalan dan hidung berair (8.3%), keletihan (7.6%) dan sakit kepala (5.7%). Berdasarkan model akhir oleh multivariat analisis kerja yang tidak selamat (AOR 2.33; 95% CI 0.212- 0,867), permintaan pekerjaan yang tinggi (AOR 1.12; 95% CI 0,445-0,921), keletihan (AOR 0.94; 95% CI 0,162-1,425), mengantuk (AOR 0.75; 95% CI 1,023-4,647) dan pendapatan isi rumah (AOR 0.34; 95% CI 0,166-0,995) adalah peramal Kemungkinan Masalah Kesihatan Mental di kalangan responden. Kesimpulannya, terdapat persatuan antara sosio-demografi, faktor-faktor psikososial dan Sindrom Sakit Bangunan dengan status kesihatan mental di kalangan pekerja makmal UPM. Oleh itu, penilaian lanjut perlu dijalankan untuk mengurangkan faktor-faktor risiko yang berlaku dalam persekitaran kerja di dalam makmal.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

Irniza binti Rasdi, PhD
Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Emilia binti Zainal Abidin, PhD
Senoir Lecturer
Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

_____
ROBIAH BINTI YUNUS, PhD
Professor and Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date:

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This is to confirm that:

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Signature: _____
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Committee: _____

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Name of
Member of
Supervisory
Committee: _____

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

^0C	Degree Celsius
AOR	Adjusted Odd Ratio
ASHRAE	American Society Of Heating, Refrigerating And Air Conditioning Engineers
B (S.E)	B (Standard Error)
CI	Confidence Interval
CO	Carbon Monoxide
CO_2	Carbon Dioxide
df	Degrees Of Freedom
DOSH	Department Occupational Safety And Health
GHQ	General Health Questionnaire
IAQ	Indoor Air Quality
ID	Identification Document
ILO	International Labor Organization
IQR	Inter Quartile Range
JCQ	Job Content Questionnaire
M	Mean
m/s	Minute Per Second
OR	Odd Ratio
PPM	Parts Per Million
r	Pearson Correlation
RH	Relative Humidity
SBS	Sick Building Syndrome
SD	Standard Error
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SPSS	Statistical Package For Social Sciences Statistics
TVOC	Total Volatile Organic Compound
TWA	Time Weighted Average
UK	United Kingdom
UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia
USEPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
VOCS	Volatile Organic Compounds
WHO	World Health Organization
χ^2	Chi Square Test

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Mental health problems have been one of global burden issue since last few decades. Depression is one of the mental health problems that affected about 350 million people and was predicted as the main sources of global burden disease by 2030 (WHO, 2015). In Malaysia, according to the National Health and Morbidity Survey 2015, there were about 29.2% equivalent to 4.2 million of Malaysian adults from 16 years old and above were suspected as having mental health problems (Institute for Public Health, 2015). In this survey, it was also reported that the prevalence of mental health problems among Malaysian adults arise from 10.7% in 1996 to 29.2% in 2015 and depression was one of the most common diagnosed mental problems (Institute for Public Health, 2011).

There were several factors that contribute to poor mental health among people. In workplace, work related stress is the key factor that affects poor mental and physical health in various occupations (Marmot et al., 2006). Aspects that related with poor mental health among working people includes personal, health factors, also physical and psychosocial workplace environment (Yunus, 2011). In Europe, the World Health Organization (2001) identified that stress related to mental health problems as the leading cause of early mortality of their populations. Winefield & Jarett (2001) mentioned that support staff of university personnel who engaged in management and research as well as academician also has high stress level. In Malaysia, previous study reported that work factors related to stress also prevalent among local university staffs (Mukosolu et al., 2015; Ahsan et al., 2009).

Psychosocial factors of an organization contribute to mental health problems among workers due to stress environment (WHO, 2010). Psychosocial factor in terms of job demand has been repeatedly mentioned in previous studies to be a significant factor for predicting mental health (Aziah et al., 2004a; Rusli et al., 2006). High job demand among laboratory staff leads to stressful situation due to tasks of student's supervision, operating with research activities, and administration (Mausner-Dorsch & Eaton, 2000). Nowadays, globalization factors in both industrialized and developing countries stimulate increase job demand of contracts workers to become higher workload, skills constraint and higher job insecurity that influence stress in workplace over the world (ILO, 2014). Hence, the psychosocial factors of high job demand, low job control and low social support in work environment was identified in previous studies that affect mental health of workers (Bakke et al., 2007; Kivimaki et al., 2002).

Moreover, physical factors in organization also important issue that affects mental health of workers. Lundberg and Cooper (2011) mentioned that physical risk factor was a common problem that causes illnesses among employees in their working environment. All this while, exposure to physical hazards in workplace including chemical, indoor air pollutions, noise and ergonomics become a critical health issues that affect health and safety of workers (Lundberg and Cooper, 2011; Briner, 2000). Previous study mentioned that unsafe physical work environment was associated with health complaint among research laboratory staffs (Nehzat et al., 2014). Besides poor physical work environments, factors of chemical and toxic exposures also can generate psychological stress among laboratory workers (Bresic et al., 2007; Aziah et al., 2004a; Rusli et al., 2006). Physical work environment in terms of poor indoor air quality in certain area of buildings particularly related with health complaints among building occupants also known as Sick Building Syndrome nowadays (Ooi et al., 1998).

Besides physical and psychosocial factors, Sick Building Syndrome (SBS) also related with mental health problems. SBS was classified as symptoms that related to body system includes general, respiratory and skin symptoms (Gomzi, 2007). Previous research postulated that fatigue and high work demand was related to the development of work stress among different occupations (Sluiter et al., 2003). In addition to physical and psychosocial factors, SBS also significantly related with mental health among office workers (Bachmann & Myers, 1995; Ooi & Goh, 1997).

It is essential to understand how work affects mental health of workers and its underlying factors. Since most of laboratory workers are being exposed to various psychosocial and physical hazards, it is important to assess their health status and working environment in laboratory. Thus, the aim of this study was to identify the prevalence and contributing factors related to Probable Mental Health Problems among laboratory workers in Universiti Putra Malaysia.

1.2 Problem Statement

Mental health problem was related with person's cognitive, poor psychological and social life but not labeled as mental illness (Keyes & Haidt, 2003). Stress is a costly and common problem related to mental health problems in workplace. It was found to be related to musculoskeletal disorders, cardiovascular diseases, anxiety, irritability and other chronic diseases among workers (Walsinge, 2013; WHO, 2010). In that case, mental health problems become a leading cause of global burden disease these days. Research of Dollard et al., (2012) stated that numerous workplace factors contribute to poor health workers. Othman et al., (2014) mentioned that exposure of poor physical, chemical work environment and psychosocial in organization affect mental health status that cause stress among government university staff in Malaysia. Somehow this present study focused on the association between workplace environment in terms of indoor air quality, psychosocial factors, and Sick Building Syndrome and mental health status of laboratory workers in Research

University because most of laboratories comprise a large variation of chemicals and biologicals substances that create potential hazards in working environment to workers. Aniza and colleagues (2010) identified that the prevalence of job stress among laboratory technician in both private and government hospitals in Klang Valley were 16.7% and 15.4% respectively. Besides, Aziah et al., (2004a) stated that high stress among laboratory workers in Hospital Universiti Sains Malaysia were 33.3% based on their job content due to high job demand and low decision latitude. Moreover, Lee et al., (2009), reported that the prevalence of mental disorder among workers from laboratory medicine in Taiwan was 34.33% includes of insomnia (28.36%), depression (25.37%) and anxiety (23.13%) that gave a significant impact to this study.

Previous data showed that the prevalence of work stress among university staffs in Malaysia was 21.7% (Mukosolu et al., 2015). Research from across the globe reports an alarming increase in the work stress experienced by university personnel (Gillespie et al., 2001). These finding indicate that immediate action must be taken in order to identify stress factors that affect mental health among university staffs. In Malaysia there is lack of study on health among laboratory occupants even though they are exposed to various potential hazards that may affect their health especially in university environment as mentioned by previous studies (Bresic et al., 2007; Rusli et al., 2006; Aziah et al., 2004b). There were significant factors that contribute to mental health status among laboratory workers based on finding from other countries. Previous study among laboratory workers in Taiwan, it was found that mental health problems was significantly correlated with job characteristic, sleeplessness and depression (Lee et al., 2009). Besides, study among laboratory workers in Croatia found that the factors of poor communication and conflicts with co-workers, chemical hazards exposure and workload were significantly contribute to stress among workers (Bresic et al., 2007). Moreover, Jacobsen et al., (1996) have mentioned health complaint symptoms of dermal (34%), respiratory (31%) also eye and ear problems (15%) were resulting work stress among laboratory technician in Sweden.

In university, most of staff and students spend their time indoors such as classroom, libraries and laboratories. Most of laboratories comprise a large variation of chemicals that been using during teaching and research activities where workers are unaware of the potential hazards in their work environment. The location of this present study was dry and wet laboratories in UPM. Wet laboratories are the workplaces where the chemicals or biological matter are tested and analysed by using a liquid based in conducting experiments (Wikipedia, 2016). However, dry laboratories are the workplace which relates a computational and mathematical operation that focusing on data analysis also teaching activities (Wikipedia, 2016).These factors create them to expose to injuries and work related diseases. Lundberg and Cooper (2011) stated that people who always exposed to electrical equipment were prone to have symptoms of fatigues, headache and skin complaints. Besides, solvent in paints, cleaning products, glues, and gasoline also can result in depression, anxiety, irritability and mood swings that have frequently used by laboratory workers (Collaborative on health and environment, 2008). As mentioned by

Lundberg and Cooper (2011), interaction of mental and physical process affect body functions and produce somatic symptoms such as pain, depression, anxiety, headache, dizziness and also sleeping problems. Mental and physical stress effects on immune systems thus cause body sensitivity and exposure for infection (Lundberg and Cooper, 2011).

In terms of indoor air quality (IAQ), improper maintenance, building design and occupant activities often related to nonspecific health symptoms termed as "Sick Building Syndrome" (SBS) that related with the duration in a particular building (Godish, 1995). Poor indoor air quality (IAQ) can affect their health and comfort because they spend most of their time about 80 to 90% indoors including working time compared to outdoors (USEPA, 1997; WHO, 2013). Previous findings showed a significant association between SBS and poor indoor air quality among university workers (Lim et al., 2015; NorFadilah & Juliana, 2012). Yau et al., (2012) also stated that IAQ in the laboratory are critical factors that can leads to depletion of work and health status of staff. However, there is lack of study done related to IAQ and SBS in university laboratory. Thus, the level of IAQ is needed to measure whether the environment is safe for laboratory occupants in university buildings.

Besides physical factor, psychosocial risk factors at workplace also affect physical and mental health of workers (WHO, 2010). Previous findings mentioned that there were significant association between stress with job demand, co-worker support, depression and anxiety (Mukosolu et al., 2015). Othman et al., (2014) stated that sources of stress were inadequate income, workload, job insecurity also lack of recognition in workplace. In Malaysia, there are lacks of studies regarding the psychosocial factors associated to work environment among laboratory workers. Hence, little is known about the exposure and effects of stress among them. There is a few studies on stress related to psychosocial factors among laboratory workers, but these studies did not taking into account on the physical workplace environment such as indoor air quality. Previous findings shows that laboratory environment can be a hazardous place to work where it has many potential hazards that interrelated with psychosocial, chemical, and physical exposures that contributes to job stress (Aziah et al., 2004a; Lahtinen, 2004). Workings in laboratory environment that surround with potential hazards instances of combustible gases and harmful substances involved of high concentration and skills affect physical and mental health among laboratory occupants (Bresic et al., 2007). Thus, it is important to conduct an assessment on worker's health status and their working environment to identify the potential and sources of health complaint by workers for further measures.

Thus, it is important to determine the mental health status and risk factors among laboratory workers because up till now there are insufficient data on extended collection of health symptoms and contributed factors that associated with Probable Mental Health Problems which included of physical work environment, psychosocial and related symptoms even though based on previous research, the prevalence of stress among laboratory workers was

higher. Besides, it is very important to understand their needs to provide a safe working environment to enable staff to perform high quality of work to fulfil their role. Moreover, it also can be used as preliminary findings to identify potential risks that can develop at laboratory work environment to increase safety, health and well-being of the occupants in laboratory.

The essential of this study is it will generate information on the occurrence of psychosocial factors and IAQ level as well as health symptoms and Probable Mental Health Problems among laboratory workers. Afterwards, all the significance results can be interrelated to form a new model that can be used for further study. In conclusion this model is considered as an added value for the extension of mental health problems study among university personnel. In these senses, this study aimed to determine the prevalence and associated factors of Probable Mental Health Problems among laboratory workers in Universiti Putra Malaysia.

1.3 Significant Of Study

This study produced an extended knowledge on sources and the predictor that contribute to Probable Mental Health Problems among university laboratory workers. Sufficient studies were done in relation work stress in various occupations, limited studies on mental health among workers in tertiary institution that focusing on laboratory workers. Thus, this study focused on the prevalence and associated factors of Probable Mental Health Problems among laboratory workers in Universiti Putra Malaysia.

Laboratory is a place for clinical or diagnostic evaluation for specialized research, and also for teaching purposes. Laboratory workers involve in multitasking such in administration, handling with equipment, training and research activities with students and lectures. Academician and laboratory staffs' tasks include scientific investigation, experiments also teaching to upgrade the level of university (Nehzat et al., 2014). Most laboratories especially research laboratory contain a wide-ranging chemicals and biological substances that are used in teaching process where it can cause health risk when emitted into the environment (Bruce, 1994). This situation indicates that laboratory occupants are being exposed to several of chemical, biological and physical hazards in laboratory working environment.

In workplace, several factors affecting IAQ such as temperature, humidity, ventilation and indoor air pollutants (DOSH, 2010; Kamaruzzaman & Sabrani, 2011). Based on the assessment, IAQ level can be identified whether it is within the recommended level or have potential risks that can develop at laboratory work environment. In addition, based on results we can manage how to upgrade the IAQ in laboratory environment for the health of the workers. Since UPM is a research university, the research laboratory environment should be maintained in a good condition and the risk should be minimal to make sure safety and health of building occupants. Thus, the generated data

from the IAQ parameters can be used for further study to produce an additional data and guidelines of indoor air quality in the university's laboratory.

Apart from physical factor, psychosocial factors also needed to provide information related to mental health status of workers. Previous study mentioned that high work strain was related to psychosocial factors among laboratory technician in local university (Aziah et al., (2004a). Based on psychosocial model, high strain was showed as high job demand, low decision latitude and low social support (Karasek, 1979). This finding shows that, working in the laboratory is stressful and can affect physical and mental health among workers. Since there are lacks of data regarding psychosocial factors related to mental health problems among laboratory workers, this study is crucial to be carried out so that the mental health problems can be detected at the early stage. Thus, understanding the sources of problems is important before taking any action.

1.4 Conceptual framework

Figure 1.1 illustrates the conceptual framework of this study. Based on this conceptual framework, the respondents from science based faculties at both dry and wet laboratories were selected to participate in this study. Both types of laboratories were selected to measures indoor air quality. And the selected respondents required answering the questionnaire based on variables given. There were four independent variables and one dependent variable studied in this research.

Firstly, the socio-demographic characteristics includes age, gender, ethnicity, education level, marital status, smoking status, household income and the number of family members which directly measured associate with mental health.

Second, work characteristics includes position, workstation, work duration, work location, type of air conditioning, working hours/day, working days/week, average working hours in laboratory and number of sharing staff at workstation which directly measured associate with mental health.

Third, psychosocial factors includes of job demand, decision latitude, social support and job insecurity (Karasek et al., 1998). All these factors were directly measured associate with mental health.

Then, Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) in work environments includes of temperature, relative humidity, air movement, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide and total volatile organic compounds. All these parameters were evaluated to determine the IAQ level in both laboratory environments. IAQ also were directly measured associate with mental health.

Lastly, Sick Building Syndrome (SBS) which includes general symptoms such as fatigue, feeling heavy-headed, headache, nausea or dizziness, and difficulty concentrating. For mucosal irritation includes itching, burning or irritation of eyes, irritated, stuffy or runny nose, hoarse, dry throat or cough. And for skin symptoms includes dry facial skin, scaling or itching scalp or ears, and dry, itching, red skin. SBS was measured associated with IAQ. And these symptoms also were directly measured associate with mental health.

For dependent variable, General Health Questionnaire was adapted to measure current mental health status among respondents (Golberg, 1979). For the purpose of this research, all these factors were tested and evaluated.

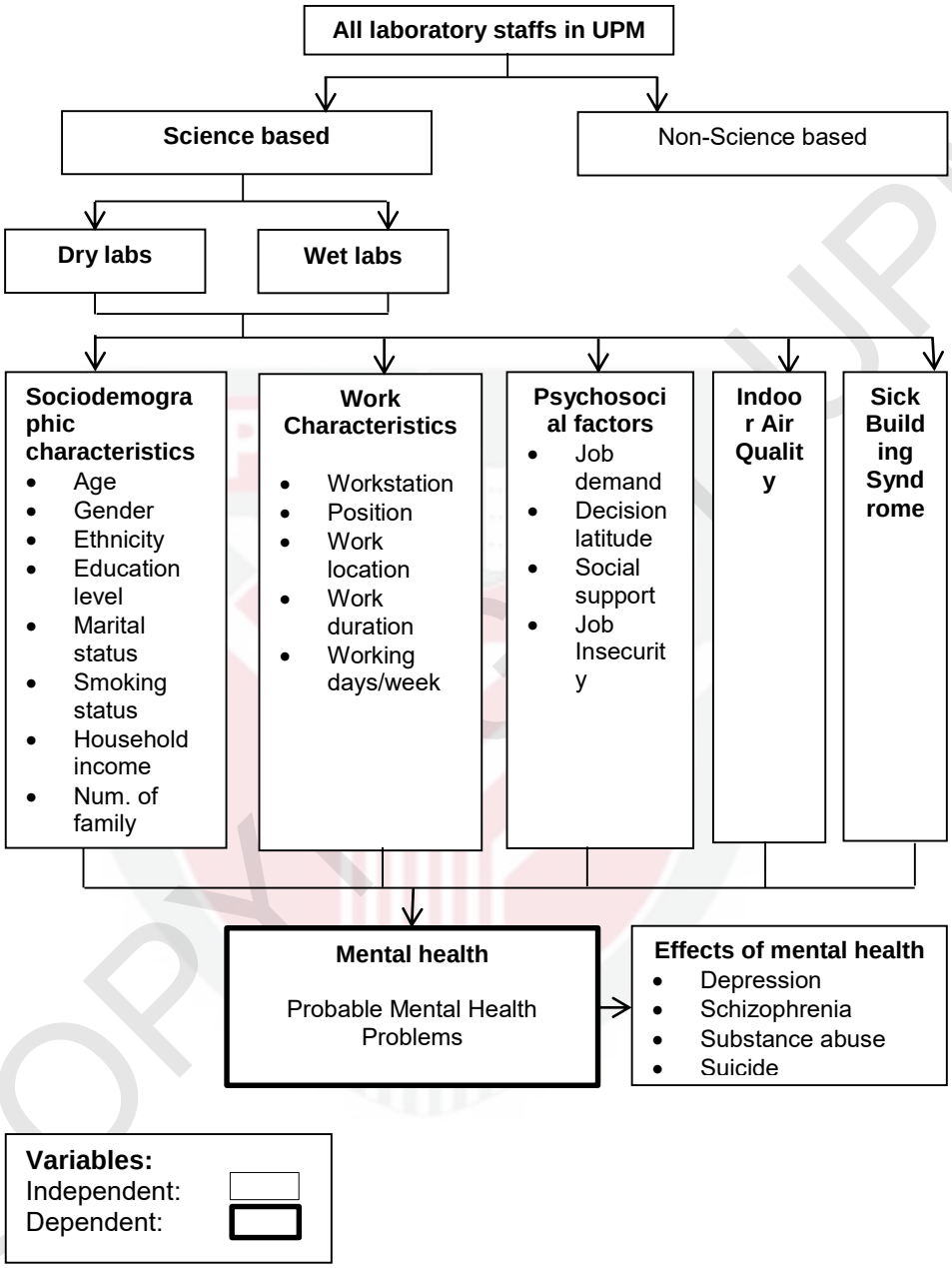

Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework

1.5 Definition of Terms

1.5.1 Conceptual Definition

Mental health

Mental health can be defined “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes on their own potential, able to cope with the normal stresses of life and work productively, and able to make a contribution to their community” (WHO, 2003). A mental health problem also known as “psychiatric disorder is defined as disorders of psychological function that have been systematically described among the clients of psychiatrists” (Golberg & William., 1988; Ministry of Health, 2005).

Laboratory worker

Laboratory worker includes laboratory assistant, clerk, equipment installer, inspector, manager, researcher, sampler, supervisor, technician, and tester in the laboratory and handling with equipment and specimens performs laboratory tests (International Hazard Datasheets on Occupation, 2000). They work in industries such as in universities, schools, research institutes, hospitals and clinics, public and private testing, inspection and quality assurance laboratories (International Hazard Datasheets on Occupation, 2001).

Psychosocial factors

Psychosocial defined as interaction between social and psychological factors. Psychosocial factors at work refer to “interactions with work environment, job content, organizational conditions and workers' abilities, demand and culture that influence health, work performance and job satisfaction” (WHO, 1984).

Indoor Air Quality (IAQ)

IAQ refers to the “quality of the air inside buildings as represented by concentration of pollutants and thermal conditions that affect the health, comfort and performance of occupants” (Spengler, 2000).

Sick Building Syndrome (SBS)

SBS defined “an excess of work-related irritations of the skin and mucous membranes and other symptoms which comprises a collection of non-specific symptoms reported by workers in modern buildings of certain workplace” (WHO, 1983)

1.5.2 Operational Definition

Mental health

General Health Questionnaire was used as a screening tool in assessing and detecting mental health problems or current mental health status of respondents (Goldberg & William,1988)

Laboratory worker

Participants who involved in this study were staffs who work at selected laboratories in UPM. In this study, laboratory workers include lecturer, researcher, laboratory technician, laboratory assistant and research assistant that spend most of their working hours in the laboratories.

Psychosocial factors

Psychosocial factors listed in the 27 items of Job Content Questionnaire based on (Karasek & Theorell, 1990) and Siegrist model (Siegrist, 1996)

Indoor Air Quality (IAQ)

Indoor Air Quality levels were indicated by the six parameters includes of temperature, relative humidity, air movement, the concentration of carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide also total volatile organic compounds.

Sick Building Syndrome (SBS)

SBS was identified by using modified published questionnaire of Indoor Air Quality Malaysia Code of Practice (DOSH, 2010). The prevalence of SBS was determined by using criteria that compatible with WHO definition.

1.6 Research Objective

1.6.1 General Objective

The aim of this study was to determine the prevalence and associated factors related to Probable Mental Health Problems of UPM laboratory workers.

1.6.2 Specific Objectives

1) To determine the socio-demographic factors and work characteristic of respondents.
2) To identify the psychosocial factors includes job demand, decision latitude, social support and job insecurity of respondents.
3) To assess the level of Indoor Air Quality at both wet and dry laboratories
4) To assess the prevalence of Probable Mental Health Problems and Sick Building Syndrome of respondents.
5) To determine the association between: a) socio-demographic and work characteristics; b) psychosocial factors; c) indoor air quality; and d) sick building syndrome with probable mental health problems of respondents.
6) To determine the most significant predictor of probable mental health problems of UPM laboratory workers by considering the other independent variables.

1.7 Hypothesis

The hypotheses for this study were:

1) There was no significant difference between the level of Indoor Air Quality between wet and dry laboratories
2) There were no significant associations between independent variables: a) socio-demographic and work characteristics; b) psychosocial factors; c) indoor air quality; and d) sick building syndrome with probable mental health problems of respondents.

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