

FACTORS AFFECTING MENTAL HEALTH AMONG POLICE OFFICERS IN THE STATE OF KEDAH MALAYSIA

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Abstract Mental health among law enforcement personnel has become a growing concern, raising questions about institutional responsibility and legal protections within the workplace. This study explores the factors influencing mental health among Royal Malaysian Police (RMP) members at IPK Kedah, focusing on legal and organizational implications. The research aims to identify key stressors and examine whether age and job rank correlate with psychological well-being, using a quantitative approach involving 100 respondents who completed structured questionnaires. Findings reveal that occupational stress is the leading contributor (mean = 4.821), followed by personal/family (4.392) and social factors (3.895). Pearson correlation shows significant positive relationships between mental health issues and both age ($r = 0.416$) and position ($r = 0.398$), with $p < 0.05$. The paper argues for the urgent need to strengthen mental health policies within policing institutions and contends that legal reform and administrative intervention are essential to safeguarding officers' psychological welfare.

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1 Introduction

In this era of globalization, health is seen as a serious social problem for a country. This problem can affect an individual, society, or even a country (Abd Rahman et al., 2021). According to Abdullah & Aziz (2023), health problems are often associated with older people. However, health problems impact all age groups, not just the elderly. Health problems are multifactorial and include factors such as dietary practices, stress, and emotional disorders, among many others (Abd Malek et al., 2020). The same goes for mental health issues. According to Abd Rahman et al. (2020), mental health refers to the well-being of individuals who can act rationally and wisely in making any decision that will affect the environment. Health is related to biological, mental, emotional, social, cultural, economic and spiritual issues. Health and mental illness include biological and psychological factors, a broad understanding of nature, and social dimensions (Tayebeh, 2019). Meanwhile, mental health is also related to a person's behaviour (Bahrami et al., 2019). A person's significant changes in their behaviour and actions will affect how they function.

Furthermore, people who suffer from mental health problems will experience difficulties in functioning. This is so because other issues can cause disability and even lead to death, affecting the individual's development and growth over time (Haji Talib & Abdullah, 2020). Indirectly, the problems will negatively impact the individuals' quality of life, create economic burdens, and cause social issues involving the individual themselves, family, and society. Therefore, each individual has to play a role and take responsibility to ensure that they are not faced with mental health problems throughout their lives. Although myriad situations can affect a person's mental health, the individual needs to have the knowledge and skills to help control and manage the mental health problems faced so as to at least minimize their negative effect on their well-being to the extent possible.

2 Research Background

Bahrami et al. (2019) stated that mental health problems are influenced by many factors, such as a person's age, job, and socioeconomic status. Any one of the factors, or any combination of factors, can cause stress and pressure, and can lead to depression, loss of life considerations, and taking immoral actions, including self-harm and suicide. Eraman et al. (2021) stated that members of the Royal Malaysian

Police (RMP) are involved in a stressful profession that places them at significant risk for mental health problems. Stressful factors include the significant risks that police officers take on a daily basis, their workload and other work pressures, coupled with an often negative attitude on the part of the community they are there to serve, which often questions the competency of the RMP in maintaining security and preventing crime.

RMP members at the Kedah Contingent Police Headquarters (IPK Kedah) are also faced with the same situation. Therefore, the research aims to identify factors influencing mental health among RMP members in IPK Kedah. This study focuses on three main mental health problems, as stated below.

2.1 Work Factor

Employment was the first factor we studied to determine its influence on mental health problems among RMP members in IPK Kedah. Hassan & Khairudin (2014) stated that problems at work can significantly influence a person's health problems. Employment factors include, for example, excessive workload, risks associated with the job, leadership attitudes within the organization, and its adeptness both at managing risks on the job and caring for the welfare of its workers. All of these things can contribute to an increase in mental health problems among workers. Eraman et al. (2021) also stated that employment factors are primary contributors to mental health problems among RMP members. The primary aim of this study was to examine job factors and evaluate the extent to which they bear on the mental health problems of RMP members in IPK Kedah.

2.2 Personal and Family Factors

The second factor we studied was the impact personal and family factors had on the mental health of RMP members in IPK Kedah. Abd Rahman et al. (2021) stated that personal factors such as age and health problems, especially stress and depression, are among the elements that cause a person to experience mental health problems. Likewise, social and financial problems, uncertain sources of income, and some other family factors also affect a person's mental health level. The more personal and family problems faced, the higher the risk of experiencing mental health issues.

Our study examined how these personal and family factors influence mental health problems in RMP members at IPK Kedah.

2.3 Social Factors

In this study, we also examined the social factors to see their influence on the mental health of RMP members in IPK Kedah. Rohany (2020) states that a lack of social support impedes a person's ability to cope with mental health problems. For example, low moral support from family members, friends, and society causes a person to feel isolated and further exposes them to the risk of experiencing stress in life. Indirectly, this situation exposes individuals to an increased risk of mental health problems. Our study also examined the impact of these social factors on RMP members at IPK Kedah. Abd Rahman et al. (2021) stated that many environmental factors can also increase mental health problems, especially for those who are employed. Such factors include the burden and stress factors associated with work, age, and life stress, among other factors. Our study also examined how these environmental factors influence mental health among RMP members in IPK Kedah.

3 Problem Statement

Mental health is the normal state of a person with no disease problems and who lives a peaceful and purposeful life. Thus, Abdullah & Aziz (2023) stated that good mental health will help a person live a quality and prosperous daily life. However, as indicated in Section 2, many conditions may cause a person, including, of course, RMP members, to develop mental health problems. Eraman et al. (2021) stated that workload and stress in work, occupational risks, and increasing age are among the main factors that contribute to mental health problems among RMP members. The Minister of Home Affairs, Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail, in a media announcement, stated that the results of a study conducted by the Royal Malaysian Police (RMP) found that stress, health status and the workplace environment are the three main factors that contribute to mental health problems among members RMP (Mohd Khalid, 2023). The Minister also stated that loneliness caused by being away from family is another factor that contributes to a decline in mental health involving police officers (Ramlan et al., 2023).

According to the National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2019, almost half a million people in the country were found to experience symptoms of stress or depression. The survey also revealed that both the COVID-19 pandemic and the Movement Control Order (MCO) (isolation order) legislated by the government also caused emotional stress following changes in the work environment, such as working from home, losing sources of income and employment and worrying about safety. Although the situation has improved since the Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO) was implemented, serious problems remain. This is confirmed by statistics from Befrienders Kuala Lumpur, which show there was an increase in calls received from those who were in distress and wanted to commit suicide in July, August and September as compared to April, May, and June 2020 (News Daily, 2020).

According to Haji Talib & Abdullah (2020), factors that may contribute to increasing mental health problems include financial troubles, academic issues, family difficulties such as separation and divorce, along with environmental factors. Aspects of mental health are also often linked to emotional intelligence, choice of behavioural strategies, and psychological well-being. Abd Malek et al. (2020) in their study found that financial problems, pressure in the family, and also a failure to control oneself, negatively impact a person's mental health problems that drive the individual to take immoral actions such as suicide.

Clearly, many people, including RMP members and RMP members who are on duty at IPK Kedah, who have to deal with work stressors, struggle with mental health problems. In addition to the risks they face while at work, RMP members in IPK Kedah might also struggle with family issues, strain stemming from ageing, coupled with other factors that have a significant influence on increased mental health problems.

Therefore, RMP members must be aware of the need to improve their knowledge of how to manage good mental health. Lacking these skills limits the ability of RMP members to control and handle various life and work situations, which in turn can increase their mental health problems, and if left unchecked, can lead to dangerous proclivities such as suicide and criminal acts. Sinarharian.com.my reported on 5 July 2021 that the decline of mental health among the community in Malaysia needs to be given serious attention, considering the increasing number of suicide cases linked

to stress due to the COVID-19. Aware of this acute situation, various studies on mental health issues have been carried out either at the government or NGO level. Thus, the mental health problems that exist in the environment of Malaysian society today have motivated us to carry out this study, which focused on the mental health problems among RMP members in IPK Kedah.

4 Research Objectives

The primary objectives of our study were as follows:

1. Identify the main factors that affect mental health among RMP members in IPK Kedah.
2. Identify the relationship between age factors and mental health among RMP members in IPK Kedah.
3. Identify the relationship between position factors in RMP and mental health among RMP members in IPK Kedah.

5 Research Questions

The primary research questions raised by our study were as follows:

1. What are the main factors that affect mental health among RMP members in IPK Kedah?
2. Is there a relationship between the age factor and mental health among RMP members in IPK Kedah?
3. Is there a relationship between the position factor in RMP and mental health among RMP members in IPK Kedah?

6 Research Methodology

Chua Yan (2017) and Abdul Razak (2018) both discuss the main elements of research methodology, which are the methods used by the researcher in collecting research data. These authors are in general agreement about the proper elements. They include the following. The aspects of study design include the method of selecting the study samples, the methods used to analyze study data, the study data collection procedure, and the procedures employed to implement the study procedure.

6.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design in order to achieve its objective of statistically analyzing the factors that affect mental health among Royal Malaysian Police (RMP) members in IPK Kedah. Quantitative methods are particularly well-suited to research that seeks to measure variables, test hypotheses, and establish relationships among factors (Chua Yan, 2017). By gathering numerical data through structured instruments, the approach facilitates an objective evaluation of the research hypotheses.

A structured questionnaire was selected as the primary data collection instrument. The questionnaire was divided into sections addressing work factors, personal and family factors, and social factors, and utilized a five-point Likert scale (Ahmad & Mahali, 2020) to quantify respondents' opinions. This scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5), has been widely used in quantitative studies to assess the reliability of attitudes and perceptions.

We applied both descriptive and inferential statistical methods to analyze the data. We also employed frequency analysis and mean calculations to summarize the overall trends, while the T-Test and Pearson Correlation analysis allowed us to examine relationships, particularly the links between mental health and demographic variables such as age and position. This multifaceted analytic approach is in line with best practices recommended in the literature for handling large-scale datasets and extracting meaningful insights from raw data (Chua Yan, 2017; Rohaya, 2020).

6.2 Population and Sample

The study's target population comprised all RMP personnel stationed at the Kedah Contingent Police Headquarters (IPK Kedah), who shared similar professional and demographic characteristics. This homogeneity in context, such as shared job responsibilities, similar organizational culture, and comparable academic backgrounds, supports the focus on mental health within a specific and relevant professional group (Chua Yan, 2017).

A sample of 100 respondents was drawn from this population using a simple random sampling technique. Simple random sampling was chosen because it ensures that each member of the target population has an equal probability of being selected, thereby minimizing sampling bias and increasing the representativeness of the sample (Chua Yan, 2017; Rohaya, 2020). This method is particularly advantageous when the research intent is to generalize findings to the broader workforce of RMP members at IPK Kedah.

The diverse background of the respondents, spanning a range of ages, ranks, and service experiences, provided an adequate basis for analysing the variations in mental health outcomes. The literature suggests that a heterogeneous sample in terms of both demographic and professional attributes can enhance the robustness of the findings, especially when exploring factors such as work-related stress and organizational pressure (Ahmad & Mahali, 2020; Rohaya, 2020).

6.3 Research Instrument

The study was carried out using a questionnaire that collected data from the study sample. The questionnaire contained several sections on factors affecting mental health among RMP members at IPK Kedah, as follows:

Part A: Respondent Demographics

The first part of the questionnaire collected relevant data and personal information of the study respondents, such as gender, position in RMP, length of service in RMP, length of service in Kedah IPK, and some other background aspects.

Part B: Work Factors

The second part of the questionnaire contained survey items related to job factors that may directly influence mental health among RMP members in IPK Kedah. Examples included workload, job pressure, job risks, and leadership practices that put pressure on members, and so on. This information was designed to reveal the influence of work factors on mental health among RMP members.

Part C: Personal and Family Factors

The questionnaire also had questions that focused on personal and family matters. These included, for example, respondents' attitudes and perceptions towards their jobs, age factors, personal problems faced, family problems, etc.

Part D: Social Factors

We also studied social factors to evaluate their influence on mental health among the survey members. For example, the respondent's social relationships with family, colleagues, neighbours, and the community are directly related to their mental health or vice versa. We evaluated each survey item found in Part B, Part C, and Part D using five Likert scales as shown in the Table below:

Table 1: Likert Scale

No	Likert Scale	Scale Value
1	Strongly Disagree	1
2	Disagree	2
3	Moderate	3
4	Agree	4
5	Strongly Agree	5

7 Research Findings

The following is a discussion of our research findings:

7.1 Respondents Background

The information displayed in Table 2 shows that nearly 80% of the respondents were male and slightly more than 20% were female. Nearly half of the respondents were between 30-39 years old with the next larger group, at 35 %, between 20-29 years of age. A much smaller group, 15 %, were between 40-49 years old, with only 2% older than 50 years of age.

The following are the background findings of the study respondents:

Table 2: Findings of the Respondents' Background

No	Item	Percent (%)
1	Sex	
	Male	78%
	Female	22%
2	Age	
	20-29 Years	35%
	30-39 Years	48%
	40-49 Years	15%
	More Than 50 Years	2%
3	Position	
	DSP / ASP	3%
	Inspector Sergeant	22%
	Corporal / Lance Corporal	28%
	Constable	25%
		22%
4	Ever Experienced Mental Health Problems	
	Yes	29%
	No	64%
	Experiencing	7%

Concerning the positions held by respondents, study findings revealed that 3% held the position of DSP/ASP in IPK Kedah; 22% held the position of Inspector; 28% held the position of Sergeant; 25% held the position of Corporal / Lance Corporal; and, a total of 22% were Constables.

Section 4 of the Table contains findings regarding whether respondents had ever experienced mental health problems. A total of 29% of respondents, nearly a third, had experienced mental health problems; a total of 64% of respondents had never experienced mental health problems; and 7% of respondents were currently experiencing mental health problems, especially depression.

7.2 Main Factors Affecting Mental Health

The second research finding sought to identify the main factors affecting mental health among RMP members in IPK Kedah. Therefore, the following is an analysis of the research findings that we obtained and analyzed using a T-Test to identify the mean for each mental health factor studied:

Table 3: T-Test Results

Mean			N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Work Factors	4.821	100	5.369	.980
	Personal and Family Factors	4.392	100	5.594	1.021
	Social Factors	3.895	100	4.902	1.190

Note: Paired Samples Statistics

Based on the results of the T-Test displayed in Table 3 above, we can see that three mental health factors were studied to assess their influence on RMP scores in IPK Kedah. Based on the T-Test results in Table 3 above, we can see that the mean for job factors is 4.821, the mean for personal and family factors is 4.392, and the mean for social factors is 3.895. This means that the main factors affecting mental health among the study respondents were job factors such as stress and workload, less effective leadership culture, risks in the job, less conducive organizational environment, organizational policies, and several other factors. Mud Shukri et al. (2023) stated that occupational factors highly influence mental health problems faced by RMP members and officers. The burden and risk of high tasks, stress in work, as well as less satisfactory policies and organizational environment are seen as factors that contribute to mental health problems among RMP members in IPK Kedah.

7.3 Relationship between Age and Mental Health

The third aspect of the study's findings was to identify the relationship between age factors and mental health problems, whether they have a positive relationship or vice versa. We examined the relationship between these two variables using Pearson's Correlation analysis. The following Table summarizes the results of this analysis:

Table 4: Results of the Analysis of the Relationship Between the Age Factor and the Respondent's Mental Health

Age			Mental Health
Age	Pearson Correlation	1	.416(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.015
	N	100	100
Mental Health	Pearson Correlation	.416(*)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	
	N	100	100

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Based on the findings of the Pearson Correlation analysis displayed in Table 4 above, we can observe that the respondent's age bears a significant relationship to their mental health. This is confirmed by the positive correlation value of $r = 0.416$ ($p < 0.05$), which shows that age influences mental health problems. The older the respondent, the higher the risk of experiencing mental health problems. Abd Rahman et al. (2021) stated that there is a positive correlation between an increase in age and mental health problems that are influenced not only by a work environment that has high work pressure but also by non-work environment factors, including, but not limited to, financial problems, declining physical intelligence, etc. Indirectly, this makes it easier for a person to experience mental health problems if they are unable to control and manage environmental factors.

7.4 Relationship between Position and Mental Health

Our study also analysed the impact of the relationship between the respondent's position and the mental health of all respondents. Eraman et al. (2021) stated that the higher a person's position in an organization, the more responsibility and workload they have to bear. Correlatively, this results in increased pressure on such workers and further exposes them to an increase in mental health problems. The following are the results of a Pearson Correlation analysis conducted on the study respondents to identify the relationship between their positions in the organization and their mental health problems:

Table 5: Results of the Analysis of the Relationship Between Position Factors and Respondents' Mental Health

Position		Mental Health	
Position	Pearson Correlation	1	.398(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.015
	N	100	100
Mental Health	Pearson Correlation	.398(*)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	.
	N	100	100

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Based on the findings of the Pearson Correlation analysis displayed in Table 5 above, we may conclude that the respondent's position factor indeed has a significant relationship with their mental health. This finding is evidenced by the positive correlation value of $r = 0.398$ ($p < 0.05$), which shows that the position factor also

influences mental health problems in RMP. The higher the position in RMP, such as DSP / ASP and Inspector, the greater the responsibility that needs to be borne, which in turn increases their risk of experiencing mental health problems. Masilamani et al. (2013) state that mental health problems are not only affected by age factors but also influenced by the job rank of the respective officers. Police inspectors are more likely to experience a higher level of stress as compared to junior officers.

The level of a person's employment responsibilities affects their mental health. However, when we speak of one's responsibilities, these can not be limited solely to one's formal work place. To the contrary, they also extend to one's family responsibilities, to the larger society, and so on. Generally speaking, persons holding higher positions of authority have greater work responsibilities. These increased responsibilities place added pressure on the individual, which can ultimately have a negative influence on their level of mental health. Based on the study's findings, which have been explained above, the main factor affecting mental health among RMP members in IPK Kedah is work, followed by personal and family factors, and then social factors. Meanwhile, the factor of age and position in RMP also affects the quality of mental health among RMP members in IPK Kedah.

8 Recommendation and Conclusion

Mental health is a growing concern that affects individuals across various life circumstances, including marital status, employment, and social conditions. Daily stressors, ranging from workplace burdens to personal and familial pressures, are significant contributors to mental health problems. This was evident in the findings of this study involving 100 Royal Malaysian Police (RMP) officers at IPK Kedah, where work-related factors emerged as the primary cause of mental health issues, followed by personal/family and social influences. According to Yahya et al. (2021), police officers, particularly those approaching retirement, face increasing mental health risks due to declining physical and cognitive abilities compounded by job stress. Rasdi (2018) further highlighted that higher-ranking officers face greater psychological strain due to heightened responsibilities. These realities demand proactive measures, including structured mental health programs that educate RMP members about risk factors and equip them with tools to manage their emotional well-being. Abd Malek et al. (2020) emphasized that mental health literacy plays a

crucial role in shaping behavior and supporting both emotional and physical resilience.

Despite increased awareness, national data reflects a troubling trend: 2.3% of Malaysians aged 16 and above suffer from mental health problems, with suicidal behavior among adolescents rising from 7.9% in 2012 to 10% in 2017 (Metro Daily, 2020). This indicates an urgent need for holistic and sustained mental health support, especially for high-risk groups like law enforcement personnel. Organizational leadership, particularly within the RMP, must take a central role in creating a conducive, low-stress working environment that prioritizes psychological well-being. Strategies should include fostering positive workplace relationships, reducing undue pressure, and cultivating a sustainable organizational culture. Abdullh & Aziz (2023) stressed that effective leadership and a supportive work environment are essential for enhancing employee satisfaction and reducing mental health risks. In the context of IPK Kedah, these efforts are critical not only for individual well-being but also for maintaining operational effectiveness and ensuring that officers are equipped mentally and emotionally to uphold national peace and public security.

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Povzetek v slovenskem jeziku

Duševo zdravje pripadnikov organov pregona postaja vse večja skrb, kar odpira vprašanja o institucionalni odgovornosti in pravni zaščiti na delovnem mestu. Ta študija raziskuje dejavnike, ki vplivajo na duševo zdravje članov Kraljevske malezijske policije (RMP) na IPK Kedah, s poudarkom na pravnih in organizacijskih implikacijah. Raziskava si prizadeva prepoznati ključne stresorje ter preveriti, ali sta starost in delovno mesto povezana s psihološkim blagostanjem, pri čemer uporablja kvantitativni pristop s 100 anketiranimi udeleženci, ki so izpolnili strukturirane vprašalnike. Ugotovitve razkrivajo, da je glavni dejavnik poklicni stres (povprečje = 4,821), sledijo osebni/družinski dejavniki (4,392) ter socialni dejavniki (3,895). Pearsonova korelacija je pokazala pomembne pozitivne povezave med težavami v duševnem zdravju ter starostjo ($r = 0,416$) in položajem ($r = 0,398$), pri čemer je $p < 0,05$. Članek poudarja nujno potrebo po krepitevi politik duševnega zdravja znotraj policijskih institucij ter zatrjuje, da sta pravna reforma in administrativni posegi bistvena za zaščito psihološkega blagostanja policistov.

