

# The Impact of COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedure for Businesses on Job Stress and Job Performance in Lodges and Homestays of Sukau, Kinabatangan

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## ABSTRACT

*COVID-19 pandemic has left accommodation business operators with no choice and they had to implement all the provided guidelines. They also need to brief their employees to ensure that they adhered to the SOP as new norms of business. To date, there is limited literature that examine the connection between SOP, job stress and job performance during a pandemic. Considering the research gap, this research aimed to investigate the level of stress among the operators and their employees in implementing the new norms brought about by COVID-19 working SOP. It specifically studied lodges and homestays around Sukau, Kinabatangan. The job stress and work performance served as a guide in the study to ascertain the findings. A total of 10 questionnaires were distributed to homestay operators and their employees. The data was analysed using quantitative and qualitative methods. Findings from the analysis revealed that for most of the operators and employees, job stress is low, but the job performance is high. Based on the findings, several suggestions were made to reduce job stress and increase job performance. Several limitations of the study were also highlighted that should serve as signpost for future research.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 (Corona Virus Disease of 2019) has severely impacted the tourism and travel industry, from the biggest global airlines to the smallest independent hotel operators. The pandemic has hammered the tourism economy and the potential shock average resulted in almost 80% decline in the international tourism economy in 2020 (WTTC, 2020). As tourism is a labour-intensive industry, the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the workforce is quite severe. The tourism industry is the major source of employment and job growth, offering high levels of employment for low skilled workers and higher skilled employees. The sector hires a significant number of seasonal, part-time and temporary workers. With the effect of the recession on, employment in many divisions of the industry were badly affected from March to July 2020. Within normal circumstances, the tourism industry will help to provide a variety of employment opportunities for refugees, women, students, and elderly people, not only in urban centres but also in remote, rural and coastal areas. The immediate response of these

organisations has, naturally, concentrated on constructively designing short-term survival strategies. As the crisis progresses, the industry is now collaborating with policymakers to identify key goals and promote medium to long term recovery.

Many countries are entering a new phase in the fight against the virus yet at the same time overseeing the re-opening of the tourism industry. Recovery is now planned to start more slowly than previously predicted. Travel limitations and prevention measures are expected to be carried out; the probability of restoration should new waves occur. Even when tourism supply chains continue to focus again, new health protocols mean that companies can run at lower capacity. In order to prevent a standstill in the tourism economy, many of the national governments around the world have implemented unprecedented steps to control the virus, as recommended by UNWTO (2020) in business operations and people-to-people encounters during their travels and stays. Malaysia entered Recovery Movement Control Orders (RMCO-10 June till 31 August 2020) which saw many businesses and industries reopened and allowed to operate. The Malaysian government eased some restrictions on accommodation businesses and allowed them to start operations with a new working Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), introduced by the government as guidelines to contain the COVID-19.

The accommodation industries inclusive of hotels, resorts, lodges and homestays are operating under new SOP guidelines provided by the Malaysian Ministry of Health (KKM) which is suggested by UNWHO (2020). The Ministry of Human Resources and the Ministry of Tourism of Malaysia have reminded that all business operators must adhere to the SOP in their business operations (The Star, 2020). Does this kind of new norm in operating accommodations with the presence of COVID-19 bring stress to the operators and their employees, particularly in work performance? With reference to lodge and homestay providers, are they feeling the pressure to perform these new norms that require adjustment in their daily work procedures so that they are aligned with the SOP as compared to the previous normal working procedures? A review of the relevant literature reveals that these questions remain unanswered. Therefore, this study aims to examine the impact of the COVID-19 SOP on job stress and job performance. A specific attention is given to lodges and homestays businesses in Sukau, Kinabatangan, Sabah.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Area of Study

Sukau is an area with a very small population in the state of Sabah, Malaysia. Figure 1 shows its location which is at the east-coast of Sabah and is approximately a three-hour drive from Sandakan city (135 km). It is about a two-hour boat ride covering 70 km upstream from the harbour in the east coast city of Sandakan. The Sukau village is located alongside the Kinabatangan River, the longest river in Sabah. Most Kinabatangan region's inhabitants are *Orang Sungai*, which translates literally into "river people". Based on the records, *Orang Sungai Buludupi* is the largest tribe living in this area. They have lived there for hundreds of years and survived on growing small crops and vegetables as well as hunting and fishing. The Kinabatangan floodplain was gazetted as a conservation area in 2005, and the Sukau village is in the heart of this conservation region. The Kinabatangan River and its floodplain are richest in flora and fauna ecosystems, which provides an incredible opportunity to see a wide diversity of wildlife including Borneo's unique proboscis monkeys, the wild Orang Utan, the Bornean Pygmy elephants and rare birds such as the Hornbills and the Oriental Darter. The *Orang Sungai*

have great regard for nature and are considered as the caretaker of the Kinabatangan. Today, these people are deeply engaged in the hospitality industry as the area has become a hotspot for ecotourism.

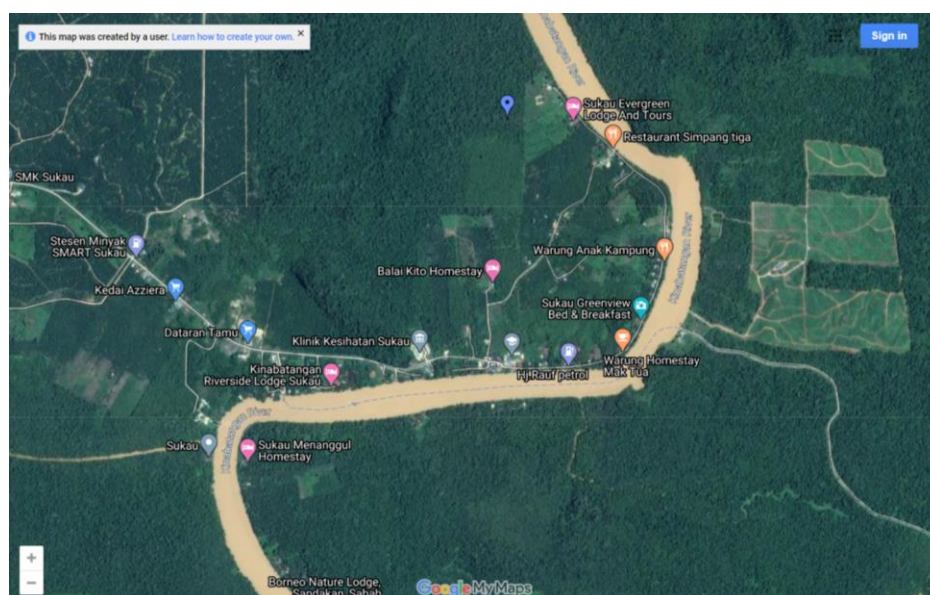


Figure 1: The of Sukau village (Source: Google Map, 2020)  
Retrieved November 17, 2020, from <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Sukau>

## 2.2 COVID-19 and the Tourism Industry

The pandemic of COVID-19 has threatened a lot of tourism businesses and contributed to a huge economic loss for tourism-dependent countries. International tourist arrivals have declined by 20 per cent to 30 per cent compared to 2019 projections, equivalent to a loss of \$300 to \$450 billion in international tourism receipts (exports) that makes nearly one third of the \$1.5 trillion produced worldwide (UNWTO, 2020). Many countries are predicted to face more significant blows than others due to their high degree of dependence on the sector, especially when considering an interesting comparison: out of the top ten destinations for foreign tourists arriving like France, Spain, the United States, China, Italy, Turkey, Mexico, Germany, the United Kingdom and Thailand, eight of the countries were the hardest hit by COVID-19, to indicate that the economic impact of tourism in those countries would be further aggravated. Based on the latest estimates, Asia will see the highest decline in travel and tourism revenue in 2020, with China bearing the highest loss of revenue (Statista, 2020).

In Malaysia, COVID-19 has caused Malaysia's estimated annual GDP growth fell by 0.8 to just 1.2 points, with a possible loss of RM 17.3 billion estimated overall. The President of the Malaysian Tour and Travel Agents Association, Datuk Tan Kok Liang stated that the global pandemic has hit local tourism stakeholders hard and has created a scenario where the very fabric of Malaysia's lifestyle and economy has begun to unravel. The economy dropped to a severe slowdown in January, when the COVID-19 outbreak first began to spread throughout China and across Asia. At the state level, the Sabah tourism sector was also badly hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and the enforcement of the Movement Control Order (MCO) made it worse. Sabah's tourism industry is heavily dependent on Chinese and South Korean visitors that accounted for almost 40% and 27% of total foreign arrivals, respectively. A recent survey by

the Sabah Development Studies Institute (2020) found that 26% of those in the industry had lost their companies, 34% of the workers were on unpaid leave, while another 32% of tourism-related employment had to be paid off. He also added that most companies had zero income due to the lack of visitors during the MCO phase. Since the operators have no revenue, they have been unable to pay their employees and cover their running costs.

However, with the disease outbreak leading countries, including Malaysia, to implement a ban on the entry and border restrictions, what was once a promising year has now become a struggle for many in the tourism industry. Malaysian Hotel Association (MAH) CEO Yap Lip Seng tells *The Edge* that for the period from January to June, hotels are considering possible losses of RM3.3 billion from room revenue alone (MyPF, 2020). In the meantime, Malaysia hopes that perhaps a rapid recovery in tourism would draw visitors back to visit Malaysia. The greatest challenge will be to regain the confidence of domestic and international visitors. The “Clean and Safe Malaysia” campaign is one of the ways in which this is to be done. The goal is to offer certification to hotels that comply with the requirements of the authorities. In addition, airlines, hotels, transport companies and other operators must collaborate and propose common travel packages. This would lower costs for companies and tourists and make the country's tourism industry more sustainable. Malaysia's tourism sector is forecasted to recover steadily by the end of the year and to stabilise by June 2021 (Welle, 2020).

### ***2.3 Defining Standard Operating Procedure***

A SOP is a collection of written instructions that record routine or repetitive procedures observed in an organisation. It is an operation-specific practice that defines the activities required to carry out tasks in compliance with industry regulations, provincial legislation, or even just a company that has defined standards for operating its business. In the manufacturing context, the SOP is a step-by-step production line technique used to produce goods and for the training of personnel. In fact, the SOP specifies the expected practises in all industries where quality standards exist. The creation and use of SOPs are an important part of an effective quality system as it provides individuals with knowledge about how to conduct a job properly and promotes continuity in the quality and credibility of a product or end-result. The word "SOP" may not always be accepted as a terminology; however, the "SOP" will be included in many administrative and management such as protocols, guidelines, workbooks and laboratory operating procedures (Bhattacharya & Phill, 2015). SOPs are planned to be relevant to an entity or facility whose activities are defined and to facilitate that entity in maintaining its quality management and quality assurance processes and ensuring compliance with government regulations. The use of SOPs should be evaluated and reinforced by the management, preferably the direct supervisor. Actual copies of SOPs must be readily available for reference in the work areas of those individuals who are currently conducting the operation, either in hard copy or in electronic format; otherwise, SOPs serve no function (Anon, 2007).

SOPs have a significant role to play as a guideline for running a business. In addition, SOPs are policies, procedures and systems that you need in the company, marketing and management disciplines of your company to ensure success. This can contribute to: (a) performance and profitability; (b) quality and reliability of products or services; (c) reduction of defects in all areas of products and service; (d) a way of solving issues between members, (e) a healthy and safe workplace, (f) safety of employees in areas of possible liability and personnel issues, (g) a guidance map on how to resolve issues such as the exclusion of emotion from troubleshooting

and the need to concentrate on problem resolution, (h) the first line of protection in any review, whether by a regulatory authority, a partner or a prospective partner, a customer or a company performing due diligence for future purchases; (i) value added to company activities (SBEC, 2020). Developing an SOP is about systemising and recording all the processes. Procedures are commonly used, typically accompanied by different methods of analysis of activities or jobs to be done in the workplace, including a methodology called an occupational safety analysis, which recognises hazards and explains their management methods.

#### **2.4 Job Stress**

Job stress can be described as harmful physical and emotional reactions that occur when the job requirements do not fit the worker's skill, resources or needs (Vijayan, 2018). When workers feel stressed at work, they lose faith and can become frustrated, irritable, or withdrawn. Other signs and symptoms of overstress at work include feeling nervous, irritable, and depressed or losing interest in work. Work-related stress is an individual reaction and differs from general stress since it is both an entity and a work-related reaction (Chen & Silverthorne, 2008). In another word, work-related stress is related to the workplace and employment nature (Hsieh & Tsai, 2019) that can change an employee physiology, psychology and behaviour (Huang, 2003). The reactions to work-related stress differ from person to person. Overly high and overly low work-related stress can have a negative impact on the performance of the person: high stress can reduce work performance, and low stress does not motivate the individual to perform. Stress happens when people view conditions negatively and can lead to health issues (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004), such as psychosocial stress or physical fatigue, which may lead to worse health problems. Also, work stress can affect interpersonal relationships and reduce productivity (Tang et al., 2002). Much of the previous studies centred on the impact of high pressure on health and work performance (Li and Chang 2007).

Based on these principles, work stress may have detrimental effects on both workers and companies, as it has the effect of decreasing moral and performance rates and increasing the intentions of turnover (Asool et al., 2020). Job stress is linked to a severe physiological disorder that induces adverse mental and physical reactions to the body due to too much effort to work in the workplace. Stress is, of course, a common and natural experience of people's lives since it acts as an internal defence mechanism against external forces that command focus, priorities and fulfilment. Workplaces can be a big burden for many employees who are dedicated to assigned activities that need to be carried out in a timely and efficient manner, at the risk of possible job losses. Consequently, work stress limits the capacity to function under pressure and maintain livelihoods. Employees experiencing stress have a significant effect on the workforce: stressful employees are usually less productive and feel more distressed and appear to suffer higher rates of illness. The staff had already been worried before the pandemic, but the new situation is causing extraordinary levels of concern. According to Amtrust Financial (2020), 62% of employees report losing productivity at least one hour a day due to COVID-19-related stress, with 32% suffering more than two hours a day. Researchers found that HR and benefit executives will be wise to step up and support workers through this time and resolve tension, anxiety and other issues. Among the things they should do is concentrate on stress management services, including mental health benefits, employee support programmes and financial wellbeing programmes (Amtrust Financial, 2020).

## **2.5 Job Performance**

This term usually refers to the act of performing duties, roles which are unique in terms of service. Job performance is characterised as the maximum expected value of the organisation of distinct behavioural episodes that a person performs over a standard period (Motowidlo & Kell, 2012). Nwachukwu (2006) defined work performance as the output. Job output is also the product of the input of a certain resource at a given time. It is conjectured that if employees' job output increases, their satisfaction and commitment will also increase. Hence, to boost a company's efficiency and income, management must first increase the performance of their workers, starting at the lowest level of the organisation, to senior management. Al-Ahmadi (2009) stated that job performance level typically depends on how successful human resource techniques are to succeed in boosting employee recruitment and commitment. Job performance can also be useful for the full range of approaches that may be used in the area of industrial-organizational (I-O) psychology to improve human performance in work organisations. Vijaya (2018) pointed out that the essence of work success relies on the concerns of the work, the goals, purpose and values of the organisation on which action is most respected, while Carmeli (2003) reiterated that workers with a high degree of intelligence can regulate their emotions in terms of maintaining a healthy mental cooperation.

Job performance plays an important role in the achievement of organisational performance (Wang et al., 2015). Management should explore ways to build a positive atmosphere for workers to improve their capability which in turns can increase their productivity and job output (Azar & Shafighi, 2013). There is general awareness among researchers that success is a critical variable in the work organisation (Suliman, 2001) and has become a major indicator in the measurement of organisational success in several studies (Wall et al., 2005). Generally, employee performance is calculated through a combination of predicted actions and task-related aspects (Motowidlo, 2003), while performance is measured by revenue. Although performance based on actual value or relative judgement can reveal overall organisational performance (Gomez-Mejia et al., 2007; Wall et al., 2004), Wiedower (2001) argued that evaluation based on performance assessment products is more reliable. High-performance workers seek greater levels of organizational outcomes involving efficiency, productivity, innovation rate and performance in cycle times (Bharadwaj, 2005) and will thus be able to assist the company in achieving its strategic goals and maintaining its competitive advantage (Dessler, 2011). Therefore, in order to attract and maintain higher employee satisfaction and efficiency, employers need to value their employees and acknowledge high-performing employees who contribute to organisational productivity (Samad, 2007).

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

The study applied both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The question items are adapted from previous studies and modified to suit this research context. This study adopted a closed-question design with a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire is divided into three (3) distinct sections: Respondent Profiles, Job Stress and Job Performance. The job stress as independent variable with 16 items were adapted from Hsieh and Tsai (2019). On the other hand, job performance is identified as a dependent variable with 16 items adapted from Rasool and Samma (2019). The sampling techniques employed in this study are purposive and convenience sampling. Purposive sampling is used to focus on particular characteristics like sample population, whereas the convenience samples are

chosen from the population only because they are easily available and the best choice to answer the research questions. The collected data was analysed using SPSS 24.0 software. The target respondents are the owners and employees of lodges and homestays at Kampung Sukau.

#### 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

##### 4.1 Respondent Profile

There were only seven (7) respondents available throughout the study, as some of the lodges and homestays were not operating during the data collection period and some of their staff were put on unpaid leave. Based on findings, it shows that in terms of type of businesses, a majority were homestay operators (57.1%) and followed by lodge operators (42.9%). While in business entities, 42.9% are the owners of either lodges or homestays and the rest are employees (57.1%). Most respondents are female with 57.1% and mostly married (85.7%). In terms of age of respondents, the highest comes from the age group of 25 to 34 years with 42.9% followed by 35 to 44 years with 28.6%. For the working experience in the industry, the highest percentage is from group 5 to 10 years with 42.9% while the less than 5 years and those in the more than 10 years group have the same value of 28.6% respectively. In addition, the educational level of the respondents showed that many of them are certificate holders (57.1%) and the rest are diploma holders, 42.9% of the total respondents.

##### 4.2 Job Stress

The mean and standard deviation values for each variable of job stress are shown in Table 1. The mean ratings are arranged from highest to lowest. From the study, in a job stress related statement *I tend to worry excessively in the workforce due to COVID-19* and *I feel listless when I was on duty because of COVID-19* showing the highest mean ratings giving a mean of 3.71.

Table 1: The Study Findings of Job Stress

Items	Mean	SD
I tend to worry excessively in the workforce due to COVID-19	3.71	1.25
I feel listless when I was on duty because of COVID-19	3.71	0.95
I feel anxious about my current work	3.57	1.13
I feel agitated with my work subsequently because of COVID-19	3.57	1.13
I feel exhausted due to COVID-19	3.43	1.39
I experience dissatisfaction at the workplace because my task was affected due to COVID-19	3.29	0.95
I feel stress cause my work involve risk subsequent of the COVID-19	3.14	1.22
I feel heavy workload	2.86	1.46
I experience stress because my job demands more than my abilities	2.71	0.95
I feel incompetent at my current work cause of COVID-19	2.57	1.39
I feel unimportant with my division	2.43	1.27
I feel vulnerable when someone criticized my job cause of COVID-19	2.43	1.13
I experience stress cause lack of training subsequent of the COVID-19	2.29	1.25
I face stress because I work under bad working conditions	2.14	0.69
I face stress due to pressure from my superior	2.00	1.00
I become impatient with my task cause of COVID-19	2.00	0.58

Note: (a) Five-point Likert scale range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), (b) SD, Standard Deviation, (c) N=7

Similarly, the feeling of anxiety with the current work (3.57) and feelings of agitation with work because of COVID-19 (3.57) showed the second highest ratings of means. Those four (4) items contributed more to the job stress. Feeling exhausted, dissatisfied and stressed because of the risk involved, however, showed moderate impact on their job stress. Whilst *I experience stress because of pressure from my superior* and *I become impatient with my task because of COVID-19* had the lowest mean rating (2.00) that indicated less important sample individuals. As a conclusion for the tested items, findings showed that job stress among the operators and their employees is lower.

### 4.3 Job Performance

The mean and standard deviation values for each variable of work stress are shown in Table 2. The mean ratings are arranged from highest to lowest. From the study on job performance, the highest mean is 5.71 that indicated that the operators and employees can cope well even though faced with difficult situations brought about COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the findings also indicated that their work performances, either operators or employees, are high despite the pandemic issue. Even though they are pressured by the current pandemic situation, they are still able to perform their usual tasks and still manage to cope with the new norms of their workplace. Whilst, *I am absent from work when I am stressed up* and *I feel useless and always think of a sense of failure when I am stressed up* is the least mean (2.14) recorded, indicating a less important sample. As a conclusion for the tested items, job performance among the operators and their employees is high.

Table 2: The Study Findings of Job Performance

Items	Mean	SD
I was able to cope well with difficult situations	5.71	4.11
Employees behaviour is an important factor for performance appraisal	4.00	0.58
Employees who perform insufficient duties carries less salary	4.00	1.00
Compared to previous month, I judge the quality of my work in the last 6 months to be better subsequently after COVID-19	4.00	0.00
I was able to cope with unpredictable situations at work	3.86	0.38
I have demonstrated flexibility in task performance subsequent of the COVID-19	3.86	0.38
I tend to lack desire in performing my duties when I am stressed up	3.71	1.25
I seem to lose interest in performing my duties when I am stressed up	3.71	1.25
I was able to cope well with uncertain situations at work	3.57	0.79
My task performance appraisal is based on the new norms of the COVID-19	3.57	0.79
During the last 6 months, my actual work performance decreased day by day	3.14	1.46
My task performance is much better with new norms of the COVID-19	3.14	0.69
I assume that my job is more challenging than my co-worker	2.71	1.11
My task performance in service much better than my workmates	2.57	0.98
I am absent from work when I am stressed up	2.14	1.46
I feel useless and always think of a sense of failure when I am stressed up	2.14	0.90

Note: (a) Five-point Likert scale range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), (b) SD, Standard Deviation, (c) N=7

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The result of this study pointed out that a kind of new norm in operating lodges and homestays with the event of COVID-19 does bring some job stress and performance to the operators and



their employees, however, minimally. On the other hand, it was found that the operators and their employees generally have different preferences on the job stress as well as in job performance. The results showed that for a majority of the operators and workers, job stress is low, but the job performance is high. Even though previous research showed that the job stress variable was negatively associated with employees' emotional distress and positively with their job performance, however, in this case preliminary findings showed otherwise. One interesting finding of this study is that the only thing that they (operators and employees) are concerned about is COVID-19. They seem to worry excessively in the workplace due to COVID-19 and feel listless when they were on duty because of COVID-19.

Physical working environment during this pandemic is a cause for concern to many employees as they are worried about being infected at work (International Labour Organisation, 2020). COVID-19 is changing the way people work, and social distances are becoming new standards. In several organisations, these new workplace practices raise questions and concerns. According to Amtrust (2020), if one employee is suffering exhaustion, it can affect an entire team, the customers and ultimately the business itself. Hence, psychological tension may obviously impact physiologically too. As a result, when the employee is exhausted, it can bring physical and emotional exhaustion and job stress. A major factor in the negative psychological effect may be the consequence of misunderstanding everywhere about what is going on, not having clear guidance, or different messages delivered, especially in terms of adherence to new norms of their working environment. In addition, it can enhance the risk of work-related exhaustion for certain workers who may already have a health condition. This may contribute to an increase in demand for health care and social assistance programmes during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Job exhaustion, such as feeling tensed, high stress level and anxiety, can require disclosure from workers who feel mentally tired, suffering headaches or eye strains, or who cannot think clearly (WorkSafe, 2020). This was not the expected outcome for the lodge and homestay providers at Kampung Sukau as most of them were feeling minimal pressure in performing these new norms in working to be aligned with SOP requirements even though it means making new work adjustments compared with their previous normal working procedures. Despite having to face challenges, the operators and employees of lodge and homestay agree for complying this SOP for their safety purpose.

The self-discipline is more important than enforcement and it is an important way to protect oneself and one's loved ones from infections of COVID-19 (Perimbanayagam, 2020). In relation to the findings, it was found that the work performance is slightly influenced by the implementation of the new norms in conducting their daily tasks and the business entities have taken it positively. However, they devised a more intensive implementation of response to COVID-19 in the workplace, which could alleviate the psychological discomfort of workers and maintain their job efficiency. The statements, *I seem to lack initiative in performing my duties when I am stressed* and *I seem to lose interest in performing my task when I am stressed up* indicated some consistency as although the job stress may affect the job performance, most of the operators and employees expressed that they are able to cope with the difficult situation or even unpredictable situation that occurred in their workplace. Another interesting finding to note is that the employee behaviour is an important factor in performance appraisal. It can be assumed that the operators and employees understood the need to align their tasks with the new norms for work-related to the SOP without jeopardizing their job performance. In sum, serious consideration of vulnerable workers can be advantageous to all workers. Workplace

intervention in response to COVID-19 could support and sustain the mental health and job productivity of workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Workplace interventions can be helpful to enhance and preserve mental health and work performance of employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is straightforward that the job stress will affect the job performance. However, for this study, the operators of the lodges and homestays can cope with the new norms in running the businesses, as well as the employees adapting to their new work procedures. As a result, their job stress is minimum and they are able to sustain their job performance. The current data is still insufficient to make an overall conclusive remark as the study of job stress and job performance among the operators and employees at Sukau is still ongoing. Employees have started to feel overwhelmed because of their current working conditions, so it is necessary for employers to carry out a risk assessment in accordance with their duties under the Health and Safety Act. Job stress is a big concern for both workers and their companies as it can impact job performance. In order to improve operational efficiency and organisational effectiveness in the organisations, it is recommended that assistance is given to the employees to cope with their stress, especially in the context of SOPs related to the current situation of COVID-19. On the other hand, the company should suggest a budget plan for the coaching and training of its workers on stress management, as it can be seen as a required step to help them minimise work stress without delay or to help them handle it effectively so that they can achieve their full capacity and job results.

The study is not without its limitations; thus, the results should be interpreted with caution. First, this study is conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic and due to that not all the lodges and Homestays are operational. Some of the lodges and homestays are under maintenance and closed temporarily. Moreover, the scope of the study is limited to the lodges and homestays located in Sukau, Kinabatangan, Sabah. Hence, to improve generalizability, further study should be conducted in other similar settings in different parts of the country or the world. Second, the study only focuses on a limited set of variables namely SOP, job stress and job performance. As the virus continues to spread across the globe, it is recommended that future studies examine how this pandemic can fundamentally change people's job interests, career growth, work attitudes, and work-life dynamics. Such a potential research strategy should help to identify a range of evidence-based ideas and strategies about how great psychological management can act to help workers not only deal with, but perhaps excel in, these difficult times. As we work through the COVID-19 pandemic, we hope that this insight will inspire scientific research to consider the implications of global health emergencies such as this from the viewpoint of emotional stability.

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