

Workplace Environment and Job Performance of Police Officer during the COVID-19 Crisis

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to investigate the influence of the workplace environment that is physical environment, supervisor support, and performance feedback on the performance of employees at the Sepang Police District Headquarters. This study has adopted a cross-sectional online-based survey design. The final data of 100 police officers are first analyzed using Pearson correlation. Then, regression analysis was used to develop predictive models of job performance. The results indicated that the physical environment, supervisor support, and performance feedback significantly influence the performance of employees. Supervisor support also acts as the most significant predictor of job performance. The overall results from this research are expected to make a contribution to the current literature regarding the roles of the workplace environment in influencing employee job performance during the COVID-19 crisis. From the managerial perspective, the results of this research provide crucial insights for the management regarding the policy that might increase job performance.

Keywords: Physical environment, Supervisor support, Performance feedback, Job performance

INTRODUCTION

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In Malaysia, the organization that is the country's main enforcement body is the Royal Malaysian Police Department (PDRM). PDRM consists of 137,574 senior and junior police officers, and staff. PDRM is a body responsible for maintaining peace and public order which is not limited to human-related order and even related to natural disasters which makes PDRM the first agency required to respond if a threat from within the country occurs. Thus, policing is a critical social role as it retains the production and reproduction of order and security. However, being a police officer is a highly stressful occupation (Viegas & Henriques, 2020; McKay-Davis et al., 2020). Malaysian police officers are no exception. Year after year, PDRM often faces the problem of violations disciplinary and poor work performance.

According to the Malaysian Public Bureau Complaint (PBC), common reports received by them are regarding the police poor actions are not investigating reports made such as cases of snatching handbags, dogs roaming in the area, house thefts, road accidents, and drug addicts occupying empty houses, police did not or were late in filing police reports on road accidents, police officers reduced and canceled the summons and traffic compound of the offenders who gave him coffee money or towards family members and friends, and others (Public Bureau Complaint (PBC) of Malaysia, 2021). Recently, Johor Police Chief, Datuk Ayob Khan Mydin Pitchay wanted to act against the officers and members under organized crime under Nicky Gang led by a fugitive businessman, Datuk Seri Nicky Liow Soon Hee (Mohamed Farid, April 14, 2021). This situation has caused the community to get a bad impression of the PDRM. Jamil (2021) also found Malaysian traffic police are exposed to different occupational hazards when carried out their duty. In addition, the pandemic Covid-19 crisis has also significantly impacted policing and the crisis also affects work performance and employee well-being (Hamouche, 2020). Working on the frontline of public services during a pandemic can be difficult and challenging. Police officers often face severe workloads and scarce resources which could affect their job performance (Hill & Hupe 2009).

Thus, with the challenges in the policing service, the current researchers need to evaluate the performance of police officers as job performance help to strengthen the enforcement agencies of the country. Campbell, McHenry, and Wise (1990, p.314) define job performance as “observable things people do (i.e. behaviours) that are relevant to the goals of the organization.” Performance is important for organizations as employees’ performance leads to business success (Gravina, Nastasi, & Austin, 2021). An empirical study found that many factors could influence the employee’s job performance. These include equipment, physical environment, meaningful work, standard operating procedures, reward, and performance feedback (Pandey, 2019). According to Alameeri et al. (2020), a decent working environment play a decisive role in employee engagement, employee learning, and employee motivation. Therefore a meaningful work environment that aids employees for focused work and interpersonal harmony is considered to be a key determinant of employee performance. Increased employee performance may be associated with many factors such as physical environment, supervisor support, and performance feedback (Park, Kang, & Kim, 2018).

McCoy and Evans (2005) characterized the physical environment with several components such as noise, air, temperature, light and color, and space in which could affect individual performance. Heidarimoghdam et al. (2020) revealed that a positive physical workplace improves perceived productivity, reduces absenteeism, improves job satisfaction, reduces turnover, and promotes job satisfaction and organizational loyalty. Similarly, Chafi, Harder, and Danielsson (2020) suggest that the physical workspace supports, and facilitate innovation and creativity between the employees. Relating to the second factor, social exchange theory asserts that leadership and supervisor support is important to reciprocate the contribution of the employees to the organization (Kim & Qu, 2020). To support this, based on data collected from the selected pharmaceutical companies in Nigeria, Ogueyungbo et al.' (2020) study showed that supervisory supports significantly influence organizational learning and employee engagement. Thus, supportive and encouraging behavior from the managers will motivate the employee to perform better at the job due to lesser work ambiguity and job stress (Grobelna, 2020).

Finally, performance feedback can be utilized to clarify past behavior and also to create future positive behavior (Sleiman et al., 2020). Empirical studies have discovered that the employees who receive frequent feedback are more likely to experience a positive work experience (Beenen, Pichler, & Levy, 2017). Based on data collected from 181 Nigerian public sector agencies, Sabiu et al.' (2019) study found that performance feedback was significantly related to organizational performance. Performance feedback is important since it reduces work ambiguity and provides the opportunity for the employees to understand the level of their performance and support the sense of belonging towards the organization.

The study contributes to the literature in two ways. Firstly, this study shows that the relationship between workplace environment and job performance. Despite the severity of the Covid-19 crisis, which has affected organizations worldwide, there is a lack of research on the organizational factors that affect the job performance of the employees of an organization affected by the crisis. Second, particularly the subject has not been touched upon in the Malaysian police perspective. Hence, through this study, an effort has been made to fill the research gap. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the influence of the physical environment, supervisor support, and performance feedback towards police officer's performance at the Sepang District Police Headquarters. The research questions addressed in this paper are:

RQ1. Does the workplace environment influence job performance?

RQ2. What is the strongest predictor that influences job performance?

The remainder of this paper is divided into five sections. First, a literature review serves to identify possible relations between workplace environment and job performance. Next, Section 3 describes the research methodology used in the study. In Section 4, the results are addressed. Last, Section 5 contains a discussion and conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Job Performance

Job performance varies from one job to another (Peiró et al., 2020.) and scholars believed it should be measured based on multiple dimensions or indicators. Job performance can also be defined as “behavioural, incidental, measurable, and multifaceted, and is also a sum of intermittent incidents which employees have done in a standard duration in the organization” (Chu & Lai, 2011, p. 106). Difficulties in creating the best and generic indicator for job performance have continued to create inconsistency in measuring job performance. As Gottfredson (1991) renowned, “One need only ask a group of workers in the same job to suggest specific criterion measures for that job to appreciate how difficult it is to reach consensus about what constitutes good performance and how it can be measured fairly” (p. 76).

According to Sonnentag et al. (2008), job performance can be categorized into behavioral and outcome dimensions. In this categorization, Sonnentag et al. (2008) believed that not all behavior can be regard as job performance, therefore the organization also needs to rely on the outcome. Therefore, job performance can be measured with the combination of positive behavior (e.g., loyalty, commitment, and motivation) and outcome (e.g., profit, productivity, sales number, and project success rate) (Koo et al., 2020).

On other hand, Borman and Motowidlo (1993) initially expanded job performance measurement into two main categories which are task performance and

contextual performance. Borman and Motowidlo (1993) recognized that task performance consists of specific behaviors in performing the job such as administrative tasks, event management, or project accomplishment which could not fully measure job performance. Therefore, they assert that contextual performance such as patterns of behaviors beyond job-specific duties or also known as organizational citizenship behavior need to be included in measuring job performance (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). Van Scotter and Motowidlo (1996) further defined contextual performance into two dimensions which are internal cooperation and job dedication. Green and Heywood (2008) identified two important factors that influence job performance, namely the individual aspects such as knowledge, skills, attitudes, and personality, and the workplace environment such as superior, physical workplace, infrastructure, incentives, and feedback. In the same vein, Magnier-Watanabe et al. (2020) and Shin, Hur, and Choi (2020). reported that three factors namely skill, effort, and work conditions jointly interact to influence job performance.

Physical Environment and Job Performance

A positive workplace can help to boost employee well-being and improve health and as result, it helps to improve organizational performance and productivity (Tuzovic & Kabadayi, 2020). In Haynes, Suckley, and Nunnington' (2017) study, the physical workplace environment aspects included office facilities, such as storage space, quiet areas and position relative to colleagues; office environmental conditions, such as lighting, temperature, and cleanliness; and other office variables, such as privacy, interruptions and work interaction. Empirical evidence, for instance, has found that the physical environment that promotes an open and common workspace helps to encourage knowledge sharing within organizations (e.g., Choi, 2020; Dilmaghani, 2020). A plethora of studies has found that the physical environment delivers several benefits to the organization. Roskams and Haynes (2020) for instance have found that better air quality can improve employee productivity, warm temperatures cause a reduction in performance as compared to cooler temperatures, distracting noise affect performance, and interactive office layout improve the performance of the younger employee. Soto Muñoz et al. (2021) highlights the temperature of the office influence worker productivity and these findings showed that organizations must focus on a proper office layout design and condition. While Marianto (2021) stressed the importance of the work environment in influencing job performance. Then, both Mansor and Sheau-Ting (2020) and Otterbring, Danielsson, and Pareigis (2020) found

that high noise environments affect employee's well-being and reduce employee motivation. Based on this reasoning, this study proposed the following hypothesis:

Ho1: There is no relationship between the physical environment and job performance.

Ha1: There is a positive relationship between the physical environment and job performance.

Supervisor Support and Job Performance

Supervisory support is defined as “an ongoing, face-to-face process of influencing behavior by which the manager (superior, supervisor) and employee (subordinate) collaborate to achieve increased job knowledge, improved skills in carrying out job responsibilities, a stronger and more positive working relationship, and opportunities for personal and professional growth of the employee” (Yoder 1995, p. 271). Supervisor support reflects the employees' perception of the quality of their relationship with supervisors (Cho et al., 2020); and it represents the degree to which employees realize that their supervisor cares about their concerns and wellbeing (Yang et al., 2020).

As prior research has found that supervisors tend to play a crucial role in reducing the uncertainties and ambiguities that employees experience in an organization, the role of supervisor support might be essential to alleviate the level of uncertainties that employees experience during the Covid-19 crisis. Grobelna (2020) discovered that supervisor support is critical for several organizational outcomes such as affective commitment, organizational loyalty, and service quality. Both Yeh et al. (2021) and Wang, Han, and Li (2021) also indicate that the supervisor support strategies help to reduce employee emotional stress which in turn help to boost up employee well-being and better job performance. Finally, Park et al.' (2018) findings indicate that supervisor support significantly affects motivation to learn and acquire new knowledge. Therefore, this study proposed the following hypothesis:

Ho2: There is no relationship between supervisor support and job performance.

Ha2: There is a positive relationship between supervisor support and job performance.

Performance Feedback and Job Performance

Performance feedback is defined as the delivery of information by the leader or superior to the employees as it could be used to improve knowledge and job performance (Ding & Yu, 2020). Performance feedback also important to help employees to reduce job uncertainty. Performance feedback was found to affect other organizational variables. For instance, Bozionelos, Lin, and Lee (2020), and Ryu and Hong (2020) revealed that the feedback environment reduces role ambiguity, improves task performance, and enhances organizational citizenship behaviors. Then, analyzing data from the 2012 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, Jong's (2016) study also finds that performance feedback diminishes the effect of role ambiguity which in turn, affects employee satisfaction. In a similar vein, Su et al.' (2019) results showed that supervisor developmental feedback was positively correlated to job performance. Feedback-seeking also has been found to mediate the relationships.

Then, Kampkötter (2017) has discovered a significantly positive effect of performance feedback on job satisfaction. Lee, Choi, and Kang's (2021) study also discovered that positive leadership feedback encourages employee freedom, creative thinking, and job autonomy. Shin, Lee, and Hur' (2021) results indicated the emotional and feedback support by the supervisors lessen the feeling of insecurity among the employees. Next, based on the sample of 163 hotel employees and their supervisors in China, Park et al.' (2021) analysis revealed that the employees that received supervisor feedback are more committed to the organization than those who not. These findings provide theoretical and managerial implications for tourism researchers and practitioners. Therefore, performance feedback could act as a powerful HR management tool.

Therefore the third hypotheses were framed as:

Ho3: There is no relationship between performance feedback and job performance.

Ha3: There is a positive relationship between performance feedback and job performance.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual structure in Figure 1 describes the relationship between the variables, to understand and define the influences from the workplace environment that influence the performance of employees. Physical environment, supervisor support, and performance feedback are expected to affect the performance of the police officers at the Sepang District Police Headquarters.

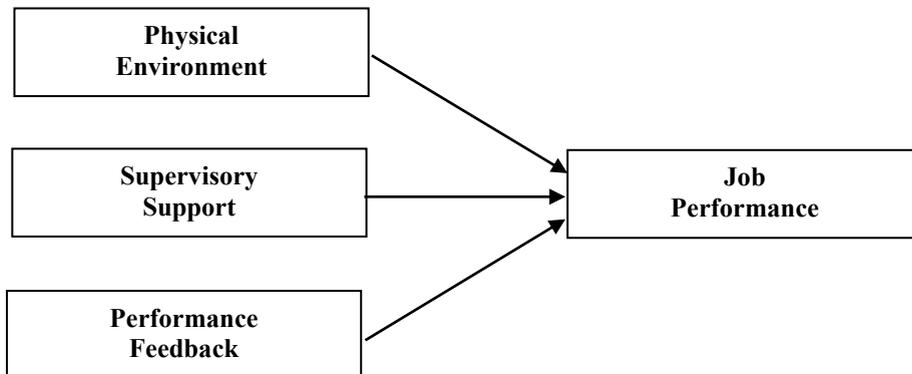


Figure 1: *Conceptual Framework on Factors Facilitating Job Performance*

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional survey methodology was used to gather information to clarify the relationship between the workplace environment factors and the employees' performance. For this study, the sample is comprised of 100 respondents, which is among the police officers at the Sepang District Police Headquarters. Among those are the employees from grades YA1 to YA13. Based on Table 1, there were 50% male respondents and 50% female respondents. The majority of respondents are under 30 years of age (42%), followed by those under 40 years of age (32%), under the age of 50 (18%), and above 51 years (8%). The highest education level of respondents is Diploma (33%), followed by SPM/MCE/CGE 'O' Level (27%), Bachelor's Degree (24%), Master's Degree (9%), PMR/SRP/LCE (3%), Certificate (2%), and Others (2%). Then, the majority of respondents is below 5 years' service (35%), followed by below 15

years' service (21%), below 10 years' service (20%), more than 20 years' service (17%), and below 20 years' service (7%).

Table 1: *Demographic Profile*

Profile		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	50	50
	Female	50	50
Age	20-30 years	42	42
	31-40 years	32	32
	41-50 years	18	18
	51 years and above	8	8
Education Level	Master's Degree	9	9
	Bachelor's Degree	24	24
	Diploma	33	33
	Certificate	2	2
	SPM/MCE/CGE 'O' Level	27	27
	PMR/SRP/LCE	3	3
	Others/Lain-lain	2	2
Years of Service	1-5 years	35	35
	5-10 years	20	20
	11-15 years	21	21
	16-20 years	7	7
	More than 20 years	17	17

The questionnaire used is bilingual in English and Malay language and it is adapted based on the criteria for this research, from different studies. Five questions were asked to test the employees' reactions to the physical environment. The researchers adopted two questions from Nanzushi (2015) and three questions from Brennan, Chugh, and Kline (2002). Sample items included "I have enough work surface area at my workspace" and "The air quality (ventilation) is adequate."

For supervisor support, five questions were adapted from Oldham and Cummings' (1996), and Scarpello and Vandenberg's (1987) studies. Sample items included "My supervisor gives me clear instructions" and "My supervisor provides me with sufficient information related to work." Next, to measure the performance feedback, five questions were adapted from Hinkin and Schriesheim's (2004) study. Sample items included "My supervisor would reprimand me if my work was below standard" and "My supervisor always gives me positive feedback when I performed well." Lastly, to measure the employees' performance, five questions were adapted

from Brennan, Chugh, and Kline’s (2002) study. The respondents were asked to rate each item on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree concerning the various statements that measured the variables. Sample items included “I can meet can” and “I am a self-motivated person.”

The data were analyzed using SPSS software. This software helped the researcher to perform the cleaning of data to identify any errors and missing values. This study examined the reliability of the constructs by looking at the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to indicate how well the constructs in a set are positively correlated to one another. In general, the reliabilities less than 0.60 are poor, those in the 0.70 range are acceptable, and those over 0.80 are good (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013).

Next, the assumption of normality is compulsory for many inferential statistical techniques. For the study, the researcher will determine the normality of the data based on the value of skewness and kurtosis. To suggest the normal distribution, the value of skewness and kurtosis should fall within the range of ± 3.0 and ± 10 , respectively; otherwise, the distribution for the corresponding items departs from normality (Kline, 2011). For the main analyses, correlation analysis is used to describe the strength and direction between the variables. Regression was also used to identify the level of the impact made by the workplace environment on employee performance.

FINDINGS

Reliability Results

Table 2: *Test of Reliability*

Variable	Cronbach’s Alpha	Cronbach’s Alpha Based on Standardized Items
Physical Environment	0.908	0.908
Supervisor Support	0.892	0.895
Performance Feedback	0.931	0.933
Job Performance	0.919	0.922

Based on Table 2, Cronbach’s Alpha value for Physical Environment (0.908), Supervisor Support (0.892), Performance Feedback (0.931), and Job Performance (0.919) were above 0.70, thereby exceeding 0.70. Therefore, the reliability of the various factors through the instrument was found to be statistically significant.

Normality Results

Table 3: *Test of Normality*

Variable	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Physical Environment	3.64	1.01	-0.453	-0.569
Supervisor Support	3.81	0.88	-0.748	0.354
Performance Feedback	3.89	0.87	-0.995	1.050
Job Performance	4.19	0.67	-0.611	-0.091

The normality test is used to test whether or not the data is generally transmitted. This analysis complied with the presumption of normality based on the findings of Table 3.

Influence of Workplace Environment on Job Performance

Table 4: *Correlation Results*

		Job Performance
Physical Environment	Pearson Correlation	0.322**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001
	N	100
Supervisor Support	Pearson Correlation	0.605**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	100
Performance Feedback	Pearson Correlation	0.501**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	100

From Table 4, there is a positive relationship between physical environment ($r=0.322^{**}$, $p=0.001$), supervisor support ($r=0.605^{**}$, $p=0.000$), and performance feedback ($r=0.501^{**}$, $p=0.000$) on job performance. Therefore, all alternate hypotheses were supported.

Prediction of the Determinant Factors of Job Performance

Table 5: *Regression Results*

Variable	Beta	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
Physical environment	-0.059	0.564	0.632	1.582
Supervisor support	0.722	0.000	0.227	4.403
Performance feedback	-0.093	0.573	0.242	4.136
R ²	0.371			
Adjusted R ²	0.352			
F Change	18.90			

When regression was performed, it was found that all the factors were identified as predictors of job performance with an adjusted R^2 value of 35.2 percent, as in Table 5, which is highly statistically significant. The ANOVA generated in this test also shows a significant probability value ($p=0.000$) and signifies that all the factors of workplace physical environment, supervisor support, and performance feedback significantly job performance. Therefore 35.2 percent of the variance in job performance is influenced by those factors. Table 5 also shows a high beta value which depicts that supervisor support ($\beta=0.722$, $p=0.000$) explains a high degree of job performance. It shows that ensuring supervisor support is important and has a positive impact on police officer performance.

DISCUSSION

Answering the first research question, the model reveals that there is a significant relationship exists between the workplace environment (i.e., physical environment, supervisor support, and performance feedback) and job performance. This is consistent with prior studies such as Tuzovic and Kabadayi (2020), Choi (2020), Dilmaghani (2020), and Roskams and Haynes (2020). Then, our study also has discovered that supervisor support emerged as the most significant predictor of job performance. This result also confirms the second research question and corroborates with findings of previous researchers like Yeh et al. (2021), Wang, Han, and Li (2021), and Park et al. (2018). According to Mohammed and Ali (2016), supervisors are responsible to provide emotional support, resources support, and also informative support.

We have several suggestions for managerial implications about the workplace environment and job performance. First of all, the management needs to take more serious steps towards improving the condition of the workplace since it positively affects the effectiveness and efficiency of employees (Haynes, Suckley, and Nunnington, 2017). For instance, reduce noise, improve air ventilation, use moderate temperature, use the light lamp, and create an appealing workspace, and utilize open space office (Soto Muñoz et al., 2021; Marianto, 2021). Moreover, organizations should pay more attention to ensure that leaders can fulfill both supervisory and leadership roles. This can be achieved through the training to assist them to adopt an appropriate leadership style when dealing with employees, together with improving their capacity to

provide high-quality performance feedback. Even though Malaysia is viewed as a country with high power distance, it is also considered to be highly collectivistic. Therefore, the supervisors need to play a supportive role and provide sufficient feedback as part of assisting employees' continuous learning and development. Moreover, the supervisors need to be given sufficient autonomy to take prompt action to address the uncertainties of employees, especially during a Covid-19 crisis. Therefore, top management should grant greater flexibility and autonomy to supervisors so that they can take their actions in assisting the employees.

CONCLUSION

The study emphasizes the importance of job performance and also identifies various aspects that have a significant effect on it. It also shows that there is a positive significant relationship between the physical environment, supervisor support, and performance feedback, and employee performance. Regression analysis also revealed that supervisor support has the most significant effect on employee performance. Although the objective of the study was achieved, however, the study has several limitations. Firstly, the findings of this research are based on the case of the Sepang District Police Headquarters. Moreover, the sample size for the data collection is quite small, and this can limit the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, future studies need to widen the scope of the study to other agencies. Secondly, the study used only the quantitative method and future research may consider the usage of other methods such as focus group discussion, in-depth interview, observation, and content analysis. For instance, the qualitative aspect of the method will provide additional information that can be leveraged for decision-making purposes. Third, the cross-sectional data collection that was implemented in this research limits the potential to interpret the results in terms of causality. Further studies can consider conducting a study that involves a longitudinal data collection procedure to deliver an accurate confirmation of the identified relationships. Fourth, our model is also limited. The researchers recommend future research to enhance the model by examining other variables such as employee loyalty, reward system, corporate culture, and other elements of the aforementioned constructs.

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