**INFLUENCE OF EMPLOYMENT ON PHYSICAL HEALTH: AN EVALUATION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL,** **BEHAVIOURAL, AND SOCIAL/CULTURAL FACTORS**

**Introduction**

According to World Health Organization (2023), Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The American Psychological Association (2018) define health as the state of well-being involving the mind, body, and spirit, with the concept emphasizing the absence of illness, injury, pain, and distress. This essay discusses the impact of employment-related psychological behavioral factors and social/ cultural factors on physical health, highlighting the importance of addressing these factors for promoting overall well-being in the workplace.

**The Effects of Employment-Related Psychological Factor on Physical Health.**

The psychological factor under consideration concerning employment and physical health is stress. Employment-related stress is a prevalent issue, arising when individuals face demands and pressures that exceed their coping abilities (Chen et al., 2022). Factors like poor work organization, lack of control, and inadequate support contribute to stress (Zhou and Zheng, 2022). It’s crucial to differentiate between pressure (which can be motivating) and chronic stress (which harms health). Even minor stress can impact physical health, leading to symptoms like stomachaches or nervousness before a presentation (American Psychological Association, 2022). Acute stress, caused by events like fights or natural disasters, can contribute to inflammation in the circulatory system and increase the risk of heart attacks (American Psychological Association, 2022).

Employment-related stress can have profound effects on physical health, as evidenced by various statistics. Chronic stress, which can result from the demands and pressures of employment, is associated with a range of physical health problems (Mariotti, 2015). For example, chronic stress increases the risk of anxiety and depression, with 51% of adults feeling stressed also reporting feeling depressed, additionally, 61% of stressed individuals report feeling anxious, highlighting the psychological toll of job-related stress (Mental Health Foundation UK, 2018). Furthermore, nearly 3 in 5 employees report negative impacts of work-related stress, including cognitive weariness, emotional exhaustion, and physical fatigue, which can further exacerbate physical health issues (Abramson, 2022). Individuals with high job strain, effort-reward imbalance, or organizational injustice may be at increased risk of coronary heart disease (CHD), with job strain associated with a relative risk of 1.63 for cardiovascular events, including stroke (Sara et al., 2018). Employees with demanding jobs and limited decision-making freedom face a 23% higher risk of heart attacks, emphasizing the long-term impact of work stress on physical health (Nordqvist, 2012). It's clear that understanding and addressing job-related stress is crucial for maintaining both psychological and physical well-being.

**The Effects of Employment-Related Behavioural Factor on Physical Health.**

Certain work-related behaviours, such as lack of exercise, can significantly impact physical health (Thivel et al., 2018). The statistics provided highlight the global prevalence of physical inactivity, with one in four adults not meeting recommended levels of physical activity. This lack of exercise is associated with a 20% to 30% increased risk of death compared to those who are sufficiently active (World Health Organization, 2022). Additionally, more than 80% of the world's adolescent population is insufficiently physically active, indicating a widespread issue (World Health Organization, 2022).

The consequences of these behaviours extend beyond individual health to societal and economic impacts. Poor diet and physical inactivity in the workplace cost countries up to 20% in lost productivity (International Labour Organization, 2005). This includes malnutrition affecting approximately one billion people in developing countries and excess weight and obesity affecting an equal number, mostly in industrialized economies (International Labour Organization, 2005). These statistics underscore the importance of addressing work-related behaviours that contribute to poor physical health.

Another behavioural factor is the unhealthy eating habits in the workplace which also contribute to poor physical health outcomes (Leung et al., 2018). Many employed individuals spend significant portions of their day at work, where eating behaviours can significantly impact overall health (Clohessy et al., 2019). Factors such as coworker influence, stress-induced junk food consumption, and time constraints contribute to unhealthy eating patterns (Quintiliani et al., 2010). This is particularly concerning for individuals with binge-eating disorder (BED), who may be more vulnerable to consuming unplanned foods at work (Leung et al., 2018). The cost of these unhealthy behaviours is substantial, with poor diet and physical inactivity in the workplace costing countries up to 20% in lost productivity (International Labour Organization, 2005). Urgent action is needed to address these issues, as almost 500 million people worldwide are at risk of developing heart disease, obesity, diabetes, or other noncommunicable diseases due to physical inactivity (World Health Organization, 2022). It is essential to understand and address these behavioural factors to promote healthier work environments and improve overall well-being.

**The Effects of Employment-Related Social/ Cultural on Physical Health.**

Socioeconomic status (SES) is an example of social/cultural factor and it significantly influences physical health behaviours within employment contexts. Those from lower SES backgrounds often encounter barriers to adopting healthy habits due to limited access to resources like healthcare, nutritious food, and recreational facilities (Gillies et al., 2021). Consequently, they may exhibit higher rates of unhealthy behaviours, including smoking, inadequate diet, and physical inactivity, increasing their susceptibility to chronic diseases (Dieteren and Bonfrer, 2021). These disparities show the importance of addressing socioeconomic factors to promote healthier lifestyles and reduce the burden of disease in vulnerable populations.

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Furthermore, individuals with lower SES may experience higher levels of job insecurity, lower job satisfaction, and greater exposure to stressful work environments (Manstead, 2018). These factors can contribute to unhealthy coping mechanisms such as smoking, overeating, or alcohol consumption, which can further exacerbate health issues (Manstead, 2018). Conversely, individuals with higher SES often have greater access to resources that promote health, such as healthier food options, gym memberships, and opportunities for leisure and physical activity (Park, 2024). They may also have more flexibility in their work schedules, allowing for better work-life balance and stress management.

**Ways Employed Individuals Can Lead a Healthier Lifestyle**

To lead a healthier lifestyle despite employment-related challenges, individuals can implement several strategies. Managing stress is crucial, as chronic stress can lead to various physical health problems. Techniques such as mindfulness, meditation, or engaging in stress-reducing activities can be beneficial (Can et al., 2020). Additionally, incorporating regular physical activity into daily routines, even in small increments, can help counteract the negative effects of sitting for long periods. Addressing unhealthy eating habits is also essential, planning and preparing meals in advance can help individuals make healthier food choices at work, reducing the temptation of unhealthy snacks (Glympi et al., 2020). Encouraging a supportive workplace environment that promotes healthy eating can also be beneficial.

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