

# Possible Factors Associated with Mental Health among Restaurant Employees in Malaysia

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## Abstract

Mental health issues affect every workplace, and they have a significant psychological, social, and economic impact. The former Chairman of National Institute Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Malaysia, Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye highlighted that ignoring mental health factors in the workplace is not only detrimental to the individual employee but also directly affects the productivity and output of any organization. In Malaysia, there has been a three-fold increase in mental health problems among the population, and the cost of mental health illness is projected to reach RM24.7 trillion in the year 2030. There are many factors that contribute to mental health among employees, and it became worse since the COVID-19 pandemic struck the world. This study aims to identify possible factors that affect restaurants employees' mental health, analyses the most influential factors, and lastly to determine the relationship between the influencing factors and mental health. This study tested three independent variables that are working environment, workload and salary. A total of 201 valid and usable questionnaires were collected among restaurant employees in Malaysia. The data was collected using an online survey and analysis was performed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The results of workload (mean=3.38), working environment (mean=3.70) and salary (mean=3.22) indicated a score leaning towards agreement. However, the three variables were weakly correlated. A multiple regression also was run to predict the

restaurants employee's mental health with the three independent variables. From the finding, only 8.6% of variance in restaurant industry employees was found to be explained by workload, working environment and salary ( $R^2 = 0.086$ ). Although these three variables have little effect on restaurants employees' mental health, these findings may alert the restaurants' operator on the importance of these variables in order to minimize potential factors that can contribute to mental health at workplace.

**Keywords:** Covid-19, Mental Health, Working Environment, Workload, Salary, Restaurant Industry

### **Introduction**

Mental health problems are becoming more prevalent in Malaysia, affecting people of all ages and having a significant effect on individual lives. Mental health illness is expected to be the second biggest health problem affecting Malaysians after heart disease by the year 2020. According to the latest National Health and Morbidity Survey (2019) stated every three in 10 adults aged 16 years and above in Malaysia suffer from some form of mental health issues. This mental health issue situation is getting worse as the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world. Mental health issues are expected to rise due to COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences on work and life very bad. Based on a survey done by Hays (2020) highlighted nearly four out of ten (37%) employees have said their mental health and wellbeing has been impacted negatively during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study of mental health is essential, particularly in the context of workplace, as it has the significant influence on public health, employee satisfaction, and productivity. Global anxiety and depression prevalence increased by 25% during the initial year of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021). This underscores the pressing necessity of addressing mental health concerns in the workplace, particularly high-stress industries like the hospitality industry.

Most countries are concerned about mental health. Kiat (2018) said mental health issues are common and affect thoughts, feelings, and behaviour and cause cognitive deficits. Mental illness has persisted for decades. According to the 2015 National Health and Morbidity Survey, 30% of 16-year-old Malaysians have mental health issues. COVID-19 is accelerating this trend. COVID-19 has devastated global economies and minds. This pandemic affected hotels, restaurants, and fast food chains. Customers infect restaurant staff because they run the operation, serve food and beverages. The interaction may have caused psychological stress which involved talking or touching customers' items during service. Unemployment can also damage mental health. 37% of workers report that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on their wellness and mental health (Hays, 2020). 94% of workers are stressed now, up from 80% before COVID-19 (Lippert et al., 2021).

COVID-19 became an international health emergency on January 30, 2020. After the first case in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, COVID-19 spread globally. On January 25, 2020, three Chinese nationals contracted COVID-19 in Malaysia (Fauzi et al., 2020). Initially, Malaysia had 113,010 cases and 471 deaths cases and the numbers were increasing. Additionally, health issues have slowed economic growth. On March 18, 2020, several phases of the Movement Control Order (MCO) to stop the COVID-19 pandemic shut down several economic sectors and shortened operating hours. The Prime Minister claimed that Malaysia loses RM 2.4 billion (US\$556 million) daily. Then, RM 63 billion (US\$14.6 billion) was lost, followed by RM 35 billion (US\$8.1 billion) the following month. COVID-19 pandemic has devastated the nation's

largest restaurant industry. For example, MCO and CMCO had closed a total of 2,000 restaurant Mamak and coffee shops nationwide (Kee et al., 2021). This outbreak hurt restaurants sales. The food business had to follow the SOPs from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. during MCO's second phase. When the government announced the second phase of MCO, the food business had to operate normally from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Pandemics require large companies to function and support their employees. Though difficult, they must adapt and lead the company to keep it going. COVID-19 dread, worry, and anxiety can cause stress and depression, especially among restaurants' employees. The MOH Institute for Health Behavioural Research found 14.2% of frontline health professionals had significant mental illnesses during the COVID-19 pandemic (Blue, 2021). High workloads, lack of employment control, and fluctuating compensation and scheduling can be linked to restaurant industry employee's mental health. The pandemic epidemic caused 75% of mental health cases in frontline restaurant workers, and as the economy recovers, occupational stress rises (Lippert et al., 2021).

The significance of studying mental health issues among restaurants staff in Malaysia cannot be ignored. Restaurant are an important sector of the service industry, generating major economic and employment benefits (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2022). The mental health of employees has a direct impact on service quality, customer satisfaction, and business sustainability. Addressing mental health concerns can result in a healthier, more productive workforce and lower turnover rates, which are infamously high in the restaurant business (Ng et al., 2021). Understanding the factors influencing restaurant employees' mental health can lead to a creation of better support networks, better working environments, and mental health programmes. Such measures can help employees reduce burnout, increase job satisfaction, and improve overall quality of life (Hassan, et al., 2023). Meanwhile, when employers and businessowners start to address the issue, it can help organizations to build a better and more productive employees. This, in turn, can lead to lower absenteeism, attrition rates, and improved employee morale, all of which benefit the establishment financially and operationally (Ng et al., 2021). On the other hand, policymaker and health authorities can use the study's finding to develop laws and regulations aimed at protecting and promoting mental health in the workplace. This is crucial for designing comprehensive mental health programmes and interventions suited to the demand of the restaurant industry (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2022; Lee & Ramli, 2023).

Apart from that, a mentally healthy workforce can give superior customer service, resulting in increased satisfaction and loyalty. This not only improves the reputation of establishments, but also helps the restaurant industry as a whole (Tan & Abdullah, 2023). Eventually, this study may be able to contribute to the current body on occupation mental health, laying the groundwork for future research and the development of effective mental health interventions (Ahmad & Wong, 2023).

In general, there are many factors can contribute to mental health problems among employees, including psychological and environmental stressors. These can include working in a stressful environment, or feeling neglected and dissatisfaction (Mental Health Handbook, 2019). A significant stressor is unmanaged work-related stress, which can become overwhelming and lead to mental health issues. The restaurant industry exemplifies this challenge. Work in this field is demanding, often requiring employees to work shifts, long

hours, and with minimal weekends. Additionally, restaurant workers may face repetitive tasks, difficult customers, and inefficient management (Amran et al., 2019; Alyssa et al., 2020). These pressures can significantly impact their mental wellbeing. This study aims to identify the possible factors influencing mental health among restaurant employees, aiming to provide actionable insights that can improve workplace conditions and support employees' mental health.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To identify the possible factors that influence restaurant employees' mental health.
2. To determine the most influential factors that influence restaurant employees' mental health.
3. To analyze the relationship between the influence factors towards the restaurant employees' mental health

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the possible factors that influence restaurant employees' mental health?
2. What are the most influential factors that influence restaurant employees' mental health?
3. What is the relationship between the influencing factors towards the restaurant employees' mental health?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Mental Health**

Mental health is a state of wellbeing in which an individual is aware of their abilities, able to handle daily life, productively work, and contribute to their community (WHO, 2004). Manwell et al (2015) defined mental health as biological, psychological, and social factors that affect a person's mental state and performance. Galderisi et al (2015) define mental health as self-awareness, environmental mastery, and autonomy. Holmes et al (2020) found COVID-19 caused stress, trauma, anxiety, and sadness. Mental health impacts decision-making, problem-solving, and social interactions (Ishak et al., 2020). Stress-resistant minds are healthy. Thus, mental health impacts performance, interaction, motivation, and worker distraction.

According to Nanda et al (2017), medical officers, nurses, and other frontline healthcare workers experienced weariness, sadness, stress, and anxiety during the previous pandemic. Working long hours to treat patients and not seeing their families causes mental health issues. 75% of frontline workers were negatively affected by the pandemic, and job stress among restaurant workers is rising as the economy slowly recovers (KFF/Post Survey Reveals the Serious Mental Health Challenges Facing Frontline Health Care Workers a Year into the COVID-19 Pandemic, 2021). Health and safety protocols may be unclear and inconsistently enforced (Shigihara, 2020). Thus, neglecting occupational stress has hurt foodservice workers' health (Rosemberg et al., 2021). Poor mental health also demotivates restaurant employees. During the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health impacts employee motivation, behaviour, and interactions.

**Workload**

A person or organisation must complete a set of tasks within a certain timeframe. In general, restaurant employees frequently deal with a rigorous workload. Employees in this field are expected to work long hours, including weekends and shift work (Nasyira et al., 2014). Fatigue may result from this as well as monotonous jobs like greeting, taking orders and cleaning. Customers who are extremely fussy and sometimes ineffective managers add to the stress. These elements come together to produce a workplace that may be harmful to mental health. Stress, exhaustion, and fatigue can lower worker motivation (Aryee et al., 2005). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic had altered business standard operating procedures (SOPs). All businesses, including foodservice, must comply to changing business hours, client limit, employee capacity, and body temperature monitoring. On the other hand, restaurant and office work differ during the MCO. According to Lai et al (2020), absent employees at restaurants cannot complete their duties, causing stress and lower productivity. To complete the SOPs request, they must perform hygiene practises and cleaning monitoring to disinfect the restaurant and client temperature checks, which would increase their workload and stress.

**Working Environment**

The workplace includes work and situation (Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015). Work includes how a task is handled and completed, training, control over one's job-related activities, completion, a wide range of jobs, and a task's inherent value (Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015). Work time, accommodations, coworkers, and job security comprise the workplace (Amran et al., 2019). Lane et al (2010) found that working hours, salaries, autonomy, organisational structure, and management-non-management contact affect performance. Workplace quality affects employee satisfaction and stress (Devi & Rani, 2016). In the highly competitive market, firms must provide a healthy workplace for employees to have fun, improve job satisfaction, and perform better (Ikumi et al., 2019). Happy workers will produce more and productive. Low job satisfaction causes low productivity, work-life conflict, decreased loyalty, increased absenteeism, increased quitting, and decreased job commitment (Zainol et al., 2020).

Additionally, workplaces may affect mental health. A demanding workplace with long hours, stress, or poor management can severely affect mental health and cause burnout and anxiety, even while it may provide stability and purpose.

**Salary**

Company employees receive monthly salaries. "Salary" refers to the monthly or annual payment of recompense to employees for their work. Salaries are extrinsic benefits. Bullock et al (2015) found that pay help ensure that all workers are enthusiastic, diligent, dedicated, and honest. Employees need pay. Many companies slashed salaries or sacked workers during the COVID-19 epidemic to maintain financial stability (Almeida & Santos, 2020). Post-COVID-19 found that 48% of Malaysian JobStreet survey respondents reported a decrease in earnings and compensation (Sunil, 2020). He further claimed that one-third of these employees had reported a wage decrease of more than 30%, and most of them expressed concerns about their finances and job security. These worries have decreased job satisfaction, especially among service-oriented workers and parents of young children. Low wages and unfixed payment systems lower employee performance (Wasiu & Adebajo, 2014). Dissatisfied workers perform worse. Employee performance and commitment declines produce these

challenges. According to Rehman and Ali (2013), earnings incentivize low-motivated workers to work every day.

### Methodology

This non-experimental quantitative study collected data from selected restaurants workers in Malaysia. A self-administrated survey was chosen because survey able to reach respondents quickly and cheaper than other forms (Cherry, 2020). Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp were used to share the Google Form questionnaire link to researchers' personal contact and it was snow ball to other respondents. Convenience sampling was used in this study due to time constraint and limited budget. Convenience sampling also considered as fast, cheap, and delivers results. The online survey data collection started from end of March 2022 to June 2022.

### Results

Demographics profile of respondents include gender, age, race, marital status, education, state, job experience, work position, current position, and income level. 74.6% of responses were female, 25.4% male. Most respondents were Malay (81.1%) and aged 20–29 (86.1%). 91% of respondents were single, 9% were married. Next, 75.6% of respondents had bachelor's degrees, while 24.4% have SPM, certificates, diplomas, master's degrees, and others. Kedah had the most respondents (39.8%) and Wilayah Persekutuan Putrajaya was the least (0.5%). Additionally, 54.2 percent of respondents had less than six months of work experience, 83.6 percent were non-managers, and 16.4% were managers. In term of current position, this study included part-time (71.6%), full-time (22.9%), and contract (5.5%) personnel. Lastly, 91.5% of respondents were in the B40 income category, earning less than RM 2,500–RM 4,849. Table 2 below explain the demograhic results in details.

Table 2  
*Summary of Respondents' Profiles (n=201)*

Characteristics	Demographic Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	51	25.4
	Female	150	74.6
<b>Age</b>	< 20 years old	9	4.5
	20-29 years old	173	86.1
	30-39 years old	13	6.5
	40-49 years old	3	1.5
	>50 years	3	1.5
<b>Race</b>	Malay	163	81.1
	Chinese	28	13.9
	Indian	8	4.0
	Other	2	1.0
<b>Marital status</b>	Single	183	91
	Married	18	9
	Other	0	0
<b>Education levels</b>	SPM	7	3.5
	Certificate	1	0.5
	Diploma	27	13.4



	Bachelor's degree	152	75.6
	Master's degree	7	3.5
	Other	7	3.5
<b>States</b>	Johor	17	8.5
	Kedah	80	39.8
	Kelantan	5	2.5
	Melaka	6	3
	Negeri Sembilan	4	2
	Pahang	7	3.5
	Perak	13	6.5
	Perlis	3	1.5
	Pulau Pinang	11	5.5
	Sabah	3	1.5
	Sarawak	3	1.5
	Selangor	34	16.9
	Terengganu	3	1.5
	W/P Kuala Lumpur	11	5.5
	W/P Putrajaya	1	0.5
<b>Work experience</b>	< 6 months	109	54.2
	6-12 months	46	22.9
	1-2 years	23	11.4
	2-4 years	14	7
	5-7 years	7	3.5
	>8 years	2	1
<b>Work position</b>	Managerial line	33	16.4
	Non-managers	168	83.6
	Owner	0	0
	Other	0	0
<b>Current position</b>	Full-time	46	22.9
	Part time	144	71.6
	Contract	11	5.5
	Other	0	0
<b>Income group</b>	No income	0	0
	B40 (Less than RM 2,500 - RM 4,849 monthly income)	184	91.5
	M40 (RM 4,850 - RM 10,959 monthly income)	13	6.5
	T20 (RM 10,960 - RM 15,039 or more monthly income)	4	2
	Other	0	0

### Descriptives Analysis

Table 3 below displays independent an dependent variable descriptive analysis. Employees' mental health had a mean score of 2.9764 and a standard deviation of 0.61. This implied that

the employees' mental health mean score range from almost never to sometimes. Work environment had the highest mean (3.70), followed by workload (3.38), and salary (3.22). Workload scored 0.53, work environment 0.64, and salary 0.61 for independent variable standard deviation. Workload had the lowest standard deviation, whereas work environment had the highest. Result implied that participated restaurants' employees found their working environment affected their mental health.

Table 3

*Summary of Descriptive Analysis*

	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Dependent Variable</b>		
Employees' Mental Health	2.9764	0.61000
<b>Independent Variables</b>		
Workload	3.3770	0.52693
Working Environment	3.7048	0.63757
Salary	3.2183	0.60892

*Note (Independent Variables): 1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neither agree nor disagree, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly agree Note (Dependent Variable): 1= Never, 2= Almost never, 3= Sometimes, 4= Fairly often, 5= Often*

**Multiple Regression Analysis**

This study used multiple regression analysis to determine the most influential factor that associated with restaurants' employees mental health. R was 0.293, less than 0.5. This suggests that workload, work environment, and income have no effect on employee mental health. The  $R^2$  is 0.086 which indicated that workload, working environment, and salary explain 8.6% of employee mental health variance. Other variables can forecast the remaining 91.4%. This suggests those three factors had little impact on restaurants' employees mental health. Table below also show result of ANOVA. F value was 6.174 and sig-F value was 0.000. Since the sig-F is 0.000 which was lower than alpha (0.05), it can be concluded that the regression model fits the data well. Table 4 and Table 5 below explain the results in details.

Table 4

*Model Summary*

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.293 <sup>a</sup>	0.086	0.072	0.58762

a. Predictors: (Constant), Workload, Work Environment, Salary

Table 5

*ANOVA Test*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	6.396	3	2.132	6.174	0.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	68.023	197	0.345		
Total	74.419	200			



### Coefficient Analysis

The coefficient analysis demonstrated that workload significantly affects employee mental health as the sig-t was 0.014 which is less than alpha (0.05). The working environment and salary factors do not significantly affect employee mental health because the sig-t values were 0.052 and 0.232 respectively, which are greater than the alpha value. From the standardized coefficient value, workload had the greatest impact on employees' mental health, with a positive beta value (workload,  $\beta=0.170$ ). However, work environment and salary had negative beta values (work environment,  $\beta=-0.156$ ), (salary,  $\beta=-0.095$ ).

Table 6

*Coefficient*

	Unstandardized	Coefficients	Standardized	t	Sig.
		Std. Error	Coefficients		
			Beta		
<b>(Constant)</b>	3.171	0.403		7.869	0.000
<b>Workload</b>	0.196	0.079	0.170	2.473	0.014
<b>Working Environment</b>	-0.149	0.076	-0.156	-1.957	0.052
<b>Salary</b>	-0.095	0.079	-0.095	-1.199	0.232

*Dependent Variable: Employees' Mental Health*

### Relationship between Possible Factors and Employees' Mental Health

Table 7 compares employees' mental health to workload, working environment, and salary. Pearson's Correlation analysis examined the association between workload, work environment, salary, and mental health. All factors were marginally linked at 0.00. The r value between employee mental health and workload is 0.196, indicating a weak but positive relationship. Since the sig-r value is 0.005, the workload-mental health link is considerable. Employee mental health and work environment have a poor, negative R value of -0.224. The sig-r score of 0.001 indicates a substantial link between mental health and work environment. Since the r value is -0.188, pay and mental health have a modest negative relationship. The salary-mental health link is noteworthy because the sig-r value is below 0.01.

Table 7

*Pearson Correlation Analysis between variables and Employees' Mental Health (EMH)*

		<b>EMH</b>	<b>Workload</b>	<b>Work Environment</b>	<b>Salary</b>
<b>EMH</b>	Pearson	1	0.196**	-0.224**	-0.188**
	Correlation		0.005	0.001	0.008
	Sig. (2-tailed)	201	201	201	201
	N				
<b>Workload</b>	Pearson	0.196**	1	-0.118	-0.080
	Correlation	0.005		0.095	0.257
	Sig. (2-tailed)	201	201	201	201
	N				
<b>Working Environment</b>	Pearson	-0.224**	-0.118	1	0.510**
	Correlation	0.001	0.095		0.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	201	201	201	201
	N				
<b>Salary</b>	Pearson	-0.188**	-0.080	0.510**	1
	Correlation	0.008	0.257	0.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	201	201	201	201
	N				

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

### Discussion

This research has fulfilled the objectives of study on identifying possible factors associated with restaurants employees' mental health. Three variables used include working environment, workload, and salary. This research has some notable strengths. Firstly, even though findings from this research found that these three factors did not directly associate with employees' mental health, but the findings might shape some direction and alert the restaurants operators on importance of these three variables in the restaurant industry in order to promote employee's good mental health and wellbeing.

To answer the first research question, a descriptive analysis identified restaurant employees' mental health factors. This research's independent and dependent variables—workload, working environment, salary, and mental health—were analyzed descriptively. The analysis found that employees' mental health scores average was 2.9764. Most respondents reported mental health concerns from practically never to sometimes on a scale of 2 to 3. Additionally, the independent variables showed that working environment had the highest mean score (3.70), followed by workload (3.38), and salary (3.22). Thus, Malaysian restaurants workers' factors range from neither agreeing nor disapproving to agreeing on a scale of 3 to 4. This may be reflected on restaurants employees enjoyed a great work environment and culture. Devi and Rani (2016) found that a decent workplace affects job happiness and stress, hence management should prioritize it.

Multiple regression analysis was utilized to determine the most influencing factors that affect restaurant employee's mental health factors. Workload has the highest beta value of 0.170 and sig-t of 0.014, making it the most influential factor on restaurants employees' mental health. Findings of this study parallell with previous study's finding which found workload considerably affects employees' mental health (Lippert et al., 2021). Working environment and salary did not significantly affect employees' mental health, since the sig-t values were 0.052 and 0.232, which are bigger than the alpha value. Workload, working environment, and salary explained only 8.6% of restaurant industry employees' mental health variance ( $R^2 = 0.086$ ). This can be implied that majority of restaurants employees who participated in this study were satisfied with their workload, working environment, and salary received. Thus, our study refuted Blahova and Paulikova (2021); Pieh et al (2020), who reported that these characteristics were strongly associated with mental health.

Finally, Pearson Correlation analysis answered research question three. All three factors were marginally linked at 0.00. Workload was 0.196 and sig-r 0.005. Thus, workload and employee mental health are weakly yet significantly related. Next, the correlation between employees' mental health and working environment is -0.224 and sig-r is 0.001, indicating a weak but significant association. Since the r value is -0.188, pay and mental health have a modest negative relationship. The sig-r value is below 0.01, indicating a substantial salary-mental health link. This study refuted prior findings (Lippert et al., 2021; Ruiz-Frutos, 2021; Pieh et al., 2020).

### **Conclusion**

Overall, findings obtained from this research indicated that respondents agreed that the predicted variables that are workload, working environment and salary have small association with restaurant employees' mental health. Although the results were not conclusive, the findings demonstrate noteworthy strengths. Again, it is worth stating that while this research only identified a small relationship between workload, working conditions, and salary towards employee's mental health, these variables could still have an indirect impact on the mental health of employees.

In general, increased workload, poor work environment, and low salary increased stress and job dissatisfaction (Lippert et al., 2021; Bakotic & Barbic, 2013). Since the data collection was done during COVID-19 pandemic, employees' working conditions were different. For example, to complete the SOPs request, employees must conduct additional chores including hygiene practices and cleaning monitoring to disinfect the restaurant and client temperature checks, which would increase their workload and stress (Ruiz-Frutos et al., 2021). Similarly, in another studies of the restaurant industry, organizational factors like raising workloads or tasks without increasing wages and not being clear about SOPs changes during the pandemic outbreak led to even more job insecurity, fewer job satisfaction, workplace stress, perceived stress, and a little less work engagement (Lippert et al., 2021). Employees are more motivated and have less mental health issues if they get along with their coworkers, manager, and company (Bakotic & Babic, 2013). For employees who work in difficult conditions and dissatisfied, workplace conditions are significant. Malaysian government launched several initiatives to assist employees during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ministry of Finance Malaysia, 2023).

On the other hand, salary also motivate and retains employees. If the salary is enough to survive during the COVID-19 epidemic, employees will stay longer (Sunil, 2020). According to Rehman and Ali (2013), earnings incentivize low-motivated workers to work every day. This study also find that job security, personal health concerns, and external economic pressure may also affect employee mental health (Blahova & Paulikova, 2021; Pieh et al., 2020). The

Finally, this research shows that restaurant operations must retain these factors, add others, and possibly improve their techniques to keep employees' mental health in excellent shape and reduce mental health difficulties. However, this research can help restaurant management understand the mental health factors affecting staff. This research may also help restaurant owners identify mental health factors. Employee productivity reflects an organization's overall efficiency, thus it is vital to maintain staff performance. The restaurant industry may retain their employee and reduce mental health issues by correcting the core misperception.

### **Recommendation and Limitation**

Future studies should evaluate additional reasonable aspects that could indicate the matter stated in this research, perhaps filling a research gap, and other variables that may affect employees' mental health to improve precision. Qualitative research is recommended for this field. Qualitative research should reveal new views and surprise findings. Finally, future study may examine a bigger geographic scope and sample size to acquire representative and thorough data.

Food service and other activities drive Malaysia's restaurant business. Thus, restaurant proprietors can now recruit more newbies to this growing business. Restaurant owners must grasp what causes mental health concerns in the workplace. A good work environment and good pay help keep employees happy and prevent mental health difficulties, especially during the COVID-19 epidemic. Appreciated and cared-for workers are more productive and less likely to burn out. Management support boosts operational productivity and image. Poor attendance, absenteeism, and performance indicate employee stress.

This research project had certain drawbacks. Time constraints limit this study's sample size. This study's other weakness was the lack of existing research on Malaysian restaurant workers' mental health especially during the COVID-19 outbreak. Next, the COVID-19 epidemic restricted movement, making it difficult to complete the survey face-to-face. Thus, the survey was done online. In an online survey, respondents did not cooperate as much as needed to answer the questions, which may have affected data gathering. After that, this study analyzed only three of many factors that potentially affect restaurant workers' mental health. Explore other factors to gain a new viewpoint.

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