

Factors predicting unsatisfactory work performance among medical interns

Authors: Nurulhuda Mat Hassan,^A Norwati Daud,^A Nik Nor Ronaidi Nik Mahdi,^A Mohd Salami Ibdrahim,^A Yuzana Mohd Yusop,^A Mohd Faeiz Pauzi^A and Ong Yu Xuan^A

Introduction

Medical internship is usually a challenging period, meant to ensure that medical interns are adequately equipped with the skills required to be safe medical practitioners. Recent data has shown an increasing rate of medical interns with unsatisfactory work performance.¹ This affects the quality of care for patients and impacts the emotional state of the medical interns themselves. There is a lack of data determining the factors predicting the performance of medical interns. The objectives of this study were to determine the proportion of unsatisfactory work performance among medical interns and determine its predicting factors.

Methodology

It was a prospective cohort study conducted among 524 medical interns. Subjects were selected from 17 Malaysian hospitals gazetted for internship using multistage cluster sampling. Selected medical interns who reported from January to April 2020 were invited to answer an online self-administered questionnaire through Google Forms, which consisted of background information, Preparedness for Hospital Practice questionnaire (PHPQ), Connor-Davidson Resilience scale 10 (CD-RISC 10), USM emotional intelligence inventory (USMEQ-i), Duke University Religion Index (DUREL) and Brief-COPE inventory. The respondents were followed up after 1 year of their internship to assess their work performance. Extension or quitting from the internship programme was considered as unsatisfactory work performance. Multiple logistic regression analysis was used to determine the associated factors for unsatisfactory work performance.

Results and discussion

Completion of follow-up was 94.7%. The proportion of unsatisfactory work performance was 6.7% (95% confidence interval (CI) 4.0–9.0). The significant factors predicting unsatisfactory work performance were preparedness in interpersonal skills (adjusted odds ratio (OR) 0.91; 95% CI 0.85–0.98) and avoidant coping style (adjusted OR 2.53; 95% CI 1.26–5.08). The reduced proportion of unsatisfactory performance of medical interns may be due to success of the measures taken to improve, such as better supervision of medical

interns,² restructuring of internship programme,¹ introduction of the mentor-mentee programme and flexi-shift system.³ The significance of interpersonal skills and coping skills predicting work performance showed the importance of these elements in internship programme.

Conclusion

This study showed that interpersonal skills were associated with lower odds for unsatisfactory work performance, while the avoidant coping style was associated with higher odds for unsatisfactory work performance among medical interns in Malaysia. Further study may need to be done on the role of interpersonal skills and coping styles on the quality of work performance among medical interns in Malaysia. The results suggested that medical schools increase efforts to improve preparedness in interpersonal skills and positive coping skills among medical students, which will help them to perform better as medical interns of the future. ■

Funding statement

Ministry of Higher Education (RACER/1/2019/SKK01/UNISZA//1).

References

- 1 Han LL. *Housemanship programme in Malaysia: Availability of positions and quality of training*. Penang Institute: July 2017.
- 2 Subramaniam A, Silon AD, Uli J, Ismail IA. Effects of coaching supervision, mentoring supervision and abusive supervision on talent development among trainee doctors in public hospitals: Moderating role of clinical learning environment. *BMC Medical Education*. 2015;15:1–9.
- 3 Ismail M, Lee KY, Sutrisno TA, Jelani IA *et al*. The prevalence of psychological distress and its association with coping strategies among medical interns in Malaysia: A national-level cross-sectional study. *Asia-Pacific Psychiatry*. 2020;13.

Author: ^AUniversiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Terengganu, Malaysia