

JOB INSECURITY, PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG PRECARIOUS WORKERS IN MALAYSIA

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Received: 1st February 2022

Received in revised form: 15th May 2022

Accepted: 15th June 2022

Published: 28th December 2023

Abstract

The economic crisis is one profound effect caused by the emergence of Coronavirus Disease. Many Malaysian organisations have downsized and retrenched their staff to deal with it, resulting in an increase in the number of Malaysians engaging in uncertain and unstable works as their coping strategies. As a result, psychological well-being is crucial in maintaining individual's emotional and mental health. Previous research has focused on factors correlated with psychological well-being in Western populations; however, it remains sparse in Malaysian setting. Hence, this study aims to explore the relationship between job insecurity, perceive social support and psychological well-being among precarious workers in Malaysia. A total of 150 responses were collected through snowball and convenient sampling method, and asked to answer the WHO-5 Well-being Index Scale (WHO5), Job Insecurity Scale (JIS), and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MPSS) for this preliminary study. The findings revealed a negative correlation between job insecurity and psychological well-being, and a positive relationship between Perceived Social Support, and psychological well-being. This means that precarious employees who are insecure about their jobs are more likely to have poorer psychological well-being, whereas precarious workers who have greater social support from family, friends, and significant others are more likely to be mentally healthy. These findings can thus assist non-government, government, or practitioner policymakers in strengthening specific policies to assist precarious workers, particularly those related to their psychological well-being, such as providing them with special insurance or life benefits.

Keywords: Precarious worker, psychological well-being, job insecurity

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Study Background

The traditional labour market in Western countries has been characterized by full-time employment, fixed working hours, fixed site of work, give sufficient employee welfares, and rigidly prohibiting layoffs (Li, 2019). After Covid-19, such working norms were altered. One notable repercussion of Covid-19 appears to be that the socioeconomic status of human existence has been severely harmed. Malaysia had establishing measures such as lockdown and movement of control order (MCO) to combat the contagious disease (Marzo et al., 2021). Consequently, many businesses were affected by the economic crisis due to the forced closures. Organizations utilised a vast scale of layoffs to deal with the implications of Covid-19, with the International Labor Organization (ILO) claiming that 94% of the worldwide workforce was affected by forced or advised workplace closures in September 2020 (ILO, 2020). During the pandemic, around 156,000 Malaysians lost their jobs in the service, construction, manufacturing, and administrative sectors (Kaur, 2021). Other pay-cutting measures, including as mergers and restructuring, have been attempted, and all have had a major impact on employment rates (Papandrea & Azzi, 2020).

This causes a rising number of Malaysian residents to be involved in precarious work that is unpredictable, unstable, and insecure, particularly non-standard work, in employment to survive in this never-ending crisis, so disrupting the conventional and gig labour market (Matilla-Santander et al., 2021). According to statistics, 28,600 Malaysians are now working in precarious jobs such as e-hailing, food delivery, as a result of the pandemic, lowering their quality of life and having unfixed salaries (Azman, 2022). Low earnings, a lack of social safety, a lack of bargaining strength and rights such as social security and being particularly susceptible under terrible working circumstances are all related with precarious employment (Kreshpaj et al., 2020). This population is also frequently associated with informal types of employment, such as part-time work, self-employment, agent work, freelance, contract-based employment, and dispatched labour.

Over the years, precarious employments have been deemed as stressors on the individuals, and typically connected with a range of severe health consequences (Bodin et al., 2019; Rönblad et al., 2019). Prior to Covid-19, working in a temporary job increased the risk of anxiety and depression among precarious workers in Italy (Moscone et al., 2016). These indicate that insecure workers face a substantial mental health concern, putting them at risk of low psychological well-being (PWB), which PWB refers to the experience of positive emotions overweighted negative emotion in the absence state of mental illness, and able to function well in his or her life (Zhang et al., 2017). They could be due to the working conditions or characteristic of precarious employments. Generally, precarious work generally has inadequate health and social insurance from government, with only 45% of population covered by at least one social welfare protection, and 55% of the population has none of any protection insurance (Matilla-Santander et al., 2021). Therefore, precarious worker may

encounter barriers to receiving health care. In addition, working under precarity has low wages, making it difficult for persons to maintain acceptable housing circumstances and food demands.

Although previous research has indicated the risk of mental health concerns in precarious employment, the negative effect on health is believed to have deteriorated at such a critical time because all workers are subjected to economic risk, and are also surrounded with social factors like changed labour market performance, and particularly, high rise of employment rate in Malaysia (Kaur, 2021). These social factors then exacerbate the threats of losing job or the stability of employments (McGuinness et al., 2012), which refers to job insecurity. Precarious workers sometimes have short-term contracts and unfixed working hours. As a result of the Covid-19 issue, precarious workers may be imprisoned with the fear of unemployment without being legally laid off, such as not having their contract renewed and being compelled to reduce their working hours (Matilla-Santander et al., 2021). Consequently, those with a high level of job uncertainty have lower mental health (Mohamed et al., 2022). This is because job insecurity increases workers' uncertainty about their future, whether they will lose their job or not, and they have no control over these changes (Witte, 1999). While job security is frequently regarded as a factor determining Malaysians' quality of life (Noor & Abdullah, 2012), and work uncertainty is common among nonstandard employments, it is critical to raise awareness about its link to psychological well-being among Malaysia's precarious workers, thereby improving ones' mental well-being.

Based on the above, both job uncertainty and precarious employment are considered as stressors for workers. While dealing with these stressors, social support, defined as the perception of having available social networks when needed (Hobfoll & Vaux, 1993), has consistently been highlighted as a protective factor to health-related and well-being outcomes (Belvis et al., 2022). This has been confirmed within the Western population in terms of insecure employment, suggesting that part-time workers with high perceived social support reported good mental health (Mellor et al., 2020). When people sense a high amount of social support, they feel reassured, which helps to reduce their stress (Watson et al., 2021). However, Mirowsky and Ross (1986) suggested that workers in precarious jobs are often socially isolated and hence lack social support. Precarious employees are more likely to have a smaller social network, and those who do have a social network are more likely to be from similar socioeconomic backgrounds (Belvis et al., 2022). As a result, it may influence the relationship between social support and well-being outcomes. Given that most previous studies were conducted on Western populations, the constraints of the Malaysian study limit the explanation of how much social supports contribute to the psychological well-being of precarious employees. As a result, it is critical to bridge this gap by examining the link between perceived social support and the psychological well-being of precarious employees. This research may give insight for the government on how to improve workers' psychological well-being amid the pandemic.

Problem Statements

Many studies in psychological well-being have primarily focused on typical organisational workers' working conditions such as physical work demand, job control, and job autonomy (see Harvey et al., 2017; Clausen et al., 2021). Despite the fact that precarious workers have significantly higher levels of anxiety, depression, and stress (Bodin et al., 2019; Rönblad et al., 2019), previous researchers have paid far less attention to employment conditions, particularly precarious work or informal jobs (Russo & Terraneo, 2020). Most notably, these research on precarious employment receive less attention in Malaysia and called for attention about well-being and happiness of precarious workers (Hussein et al., 2018). About the rise of precarious employment in Malaysia, this study tries to fill a gap by focusing on those who work in precarious situations, with the purpose of generalising the findings.

Furthermore, there is currently a paucity of understanding about how job insecurity and perceived social supports act as factors affect Malaysian precarious employees' psychological well-being. Previous research on job insecurity and psychological well-being focused on gig economy or part-time workers in Western countries rather than Asian populations (see Matilla-Santander et al., 2021; Moscone et al., 2016). Probst and Lawler (2006) observed that, given the same level of job insecurity, Asian or Eastern employees experienced a greater influence on emotional and behavioural reactions than Western employees. In Malaysia, job uncertainty is regarded as a crucial factor influencing employees' quality of life (Noor & Abdullah, 2012). This could be attributed to Malaysians' collectivist culture, which values belonging in the organisation (Chen et al., 2016), causing them to be more sensitive to the effects of job instability. As a result, previous findings from Western studies may not be applicable to Malaysian industrial workforce. Finally, while social support is commonly used in research and has been shown to reduce stress (see Belvis et al., 2022; Watson et al., 2021), there is inconsistent literature that claims social support may increase the stress level of precarious workers due to the possibility of isolation and a smaller social network with similar social economic status (Mirowsky & Ross, 1986). As a result, more research is required to clarify how social support relates to psychological well-being among precarious workers during the epidemic.

Research Questions

1. Does job insecurity negatively correlate with psychological well-being among Malaysian precarious workers?
2. Do perceived social supports positively correlate with psychological well-being among Malaysian precarious workers?

Research Objectives

This study aims to examine psychological well-being determinants among precarious workers in Malaysia. The first objective is to examine the correlation between job insecurity and psychological well-being among Malaysian precarious workers. Secondly, this study is also to investigate the correlation between perceived social supports and psychological well-being among Malaysian precarious workers.

Hypotheses

- H₁: Job insecurity is negatively correlated with psychological well-being among Malaysian precarious workers.
 H₂: Perceived social support is positively correlated with psychological well-being among Malaysian precarious workers.

■ 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Job security, and perceived social supports are the essential needs of a human being. The importance of these needs can be explained through Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory. This theory explains human motivation by focusing on distinct levels of need. According to the notion, persons are motivated to meet their needs in a hierarchical sequence. These levels range from the most basic to the most advanced. Maslow initially believed that a person is required to complete one level before moving on to the next. These levels, according to a more current viewpoint, overlap. As a person progresses through the stages, their motivation becomes more focused on these levels. Despite being primarily concerned with higher levels, they will continue to target lower hierarchical levels, albeit with less zeal. This list starts with the most fundamental needs and progresses to more complex needs. The levels are ("Maslow's hierarchy of needs," 2016);

Physiological needs- Physiological needs are the first of Maslow's hierarchy's id-driven basic needs. Food and water, adequate rest, clothing and shelter, overall health, and reproduction are the most fundamental human survival needs. According to Maslow, these basic physiological needs must be met before people progress to the next stage of fulfilment.

Safety needs- Safety is the next lowest-level need. Protection from violence and theft, mental stability and well-being, health security, and financial security are all examples of safety requirements.

Love and belonging needs- The social needs on the third level of Maslow's hierarchy are the last of the so-called lower needs related to human connection. Friendships and family relationships are among these needs, both with biological family (parents, siblings, children) and chosen family (spouses and partners). To achieve a sense of heightened kinship, physical and emotional intimacy ranging from sexual partnerships to intimate emotional bonds must be present. It is also related to the working environment where the relationship between work colleagues is also included.

Esteem needs- The higher needs, which begin with esteem, are ego-driven needs. Self-respect (the conviction that you are valuable and deserving of dignity) and self-esteem are the critical components of esteem (confidence in your potential for personal growth and accomplishments). Maslow distinguishes two sorts of self-esteem: esteem based on respect and appreciation from others and esteem based on self-assessment. This later sort of self-esteem gives rise to self-assurance and independence.

Self-actualization needs- Self-actualization describes the realisation of full individual potential. Self-actualization needs, also known as self-fulfilment needs, are at the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Education, skill development (the refinement of abilities in music, athletics, design, cuisine, and gardening), caring for others, and broader ambitions such as learning a new language, traveling to new locations, and winning prizes are all examples of self-actualization needs.

Therefore, precarious workers experience instability of their basic needs, especially during the pandemic, where they experience job insecurity, and lack of social interaction that cause threat to the social supports as the resource.

Psychological Well-being

Psychological well-being (PWB) refers to inter- and intra-individual levels of positive functioning, such as one's sense of connectedness to others and self-referent attitudes, such as one's sense of mastery and personal growth (Burns, 2015). It is based on the eudaemonic presumptions that whether or not individuals conduct their lives following their true nature or spirit (daimon). It is also about one's positive mental health that derives from the mechanism of optimum and healthy functioning, as well as positive life adjustments (Michalos, 2014). Speculating from the Carol Ryff's model of PWB, PWB was influenced by Allport's concept of the mature personality, Rogers' fully functioning individual, and Maslow's notion of self-actualization. It consists of six distinct areas: autonomy, personal growth, self-acceptance, purpose in life, environmental mastery, and positive relatedness with others. Self-acceptance is an essential construct within Maslow's theory that defines self-actualization and fully functioning individuals. It also emphasises the ability to form warm, trusting relationships with others and to be sensitive and compassionate toward others. These individuals, however, remain autonomous, defying society demands to change and comply. Environmental mastery indicates the ability to manage and function within restrictions, whereas life purpose reflects the capability for goal selection and generating a sense of life direction, all of which contribute to meaning in one's life. Personal growth indicates an individual's ability to develop and realise one's own inner potential. According to Ryff's theory, these PWB notions are all critical to an individual's ability to actualize and maintain a fully functioning self (Van Dierendonck et al., 2008).

PWB has been demonstrated in studies to be beneficial in a variety of ways. In terms of personal health outcomes, persons with high PWB were more likely to maintain and participate in physical activity (Kim et al., 2016), which resulted in a longer lifetime (Hernandez et al., 2017). It may also act as a protective factor, decreasing the likelihood of developing psychopathology (Weiss et al., 2016). In terms of work domains, higher PWB has been linked to more coworker support among working people and crucial in supporting drive gig workers' emotional functioning in the gig economy, despite the fact that they are regularly exposed to road hazards and caught in the COVID-19 dilemma (Jackman et al., 2020; Apouey et al., 2020). Drivers with higher PWB were able to focus on the positive aspects of their daily functioning, such as enjoying the scenery when driving, and so felt less nervous and stressed when working in a dangerous profession. As a result, previous research suggests that PWB plays a significant role in mental health enhancement. To improve the level of PWB among precarious workers in Malaysia, the associating factors of PWB must be investigated.

The Correlation between Job Insecurity and Psychological Well-being

Job insecurity (JI) can be interpreted from both cognitive and affective perspectives. Cognitive job insecurity refers to the threat of job employment, whereas affective job insecurity refers to an individual's emotional reaction to the perceived threat of the job (e.g., worry, concerns) (Jiang & Lavaysse, 2018). Furthermore, there are two types of job insecurity: qualitative and quantitative job insecurity. Quantitative JI hypothesises both cognitive and affective aspects of JI, such as the perception of uncertain employment and the anxiety caused by the threat (Witte, 2005). Qualitative JI, on the other hand, is described as the perception of unfavourable changes in the quality of the job connection, such as a lack of career advancement or wage increases (Hellgren et al., 1999, p. 182). Regardless of how job insecurity is seen, it has three basic characteristics: a subjective experience that can be interpreted differently by different people, a future-focused predicament, and an involuntary threat concerning the job (Stankeviciute et al., 2021). Therefore, from aspect of the quantitative job insecurity, job insecurity is defined as a perceived threat to the continuity and stability of employment in the current study (Shoss, 2017). Moreover, it also exists on a continuum from insecure to secure, where employees experience job security when they perceive that the continuity and stability of their job are unthreatened or unaffected.

Job insecurity is a notion strongly related to precarious work in this area, and it exposes workers' perspectives on their working condition. As a result, the individual's subjectivity is linked to the socioeconomic environment, leading to the socio-psychological phenomena of precarious work. Job insecurity can then be considered as a significant stressor, potentially bringing more demands to working individuals than permanent job loss (Witte, 1999). Previous research has shown that it has several harmful implications on workers' well-being and mental health (Lee et al., 2018; Llosa et al., 2018). However, because Covid-19 created a recession in the world economy, the phenomenon of employment insecurity may have worsened in the recent outbreak. As a result of organisational coping measures with the crisis, many workers were compelled to reduce work hours, lose jobs, and reduce pay, resulting in increased job insecurity among the present working landscape (Wilson et al., 2020). It was a challenging experience that prompted people to feel anxious, affecting their overall livelihood. There has been study on job insecurity that has led to a consensus that feeling uncertain about one's employment future is related with several negative outcomes, both short and long term (Witte et al., 2016). For example, a Western study found that precarious workers experienced significant levels of job instability, which was linked to psychological discomfort such as anxiety and depression (Russo & Terraneo, 2020). Similar result has been found among Indonesian full-time workers (Soelton et al., 2020). This could be because employment insecurity creates a sense of powerlessness and uncontrollability (Witte, 1999). Workers then have no understanding how or when to resolve unstable conditions, resulting in negative mood and poor well-being.

Furthermore, according to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1954), secure employment is regarded a basic safety need because it is also necessary for persons to get other needs such as food and belongings (Johoda, 1981). When job instability develops, it functions as a stressor, influencing one's employment with the possibility of loss, as well as the impact on income (Hellgren et al., 1999). As a result, it may prevent persons from meeting other needs and becoming self-actualized. Despite evidence indicating some detrimental effects of job insecurity, the current study intends to investigate the correlation of job insecurity on the psychological well-being of precarious workers because most previous studies have not been conducted in Malaysia.

The Correlation Between Perceived Social Support and Psychological Well-being

Miriam Stewart's (1989) coping theory defines social supports as an individual's relationship with his or her surroundings. It is seen as a psychological and material resource aimed at enhancing one's ability to deal with stress (Cohen, 1985). In terms of personal social support system, family is one source of support due to the pleasant and trustworthy relationship developed between members, whilst friends are regarded as a helpful relationship that takes care of each other with affections. Significant others are those who are thought important and have a significant influence on that individual (Zimet et al., 1988). In this study, social support is described as employees' perception of having readily available social networks to get aid from friends, family, and significant others when presented with a stressful scenario (Hobfoll & Vaux, 1993).

Given that precarious employment is a stressful situation as aforementioned, social supports serve as a resourceful capital that promotes one's well-being by acting as a stress buffer. There is evidence that social supports influence occupational stressors. Mellor et al. (2020), for example, found that social support served as a buffer to the negative effect of part-time employment on organisation workers' mental health among French workers, and Menéndez-Espina et al. (2019) discovered that women tend to use social support as a coping strategy when dealing with stress caused by threats of unstable employment, resulting in the preservation of one's psychological well-being. This could be because when people have a positive perspective of how easily available social assistance is, they feel more secure and have more confidence in dealing with stressful situations (Wethington & Kessler, 1986). Similarly, similar results were reported in a study that looked at the impact of social support on employee well-being during the Covid-19 outbreak in the Chinese population (Liu et al., 2021). Such findings could be linked to the collectivism culture that Asians adhere to, in which they value hormonal interpersonal relationships from social networks (Sumari et al., 2019). When people report high social support, it also suggests that they have created a good and helpful relationship with their social circles, on which they can trust and depend, for example, family supports, to assist them adjust to their life events (Lu, 2009).

According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, social support is classified as a desire for love and belonging. Individuals with more perceived social support may feel more connected and belonged to their social networks, and they may know that they are accepted by others. As a result, when people are in stressful situations, people with high perceived social support are aware that they may readily call out to their social network for emotional or tangible assistance. Then, social supports promote self-esteem and positive affect, which add to their general well-being (Cohen & Syme 1985). Despite studies confirming the correlation between social support and stressors, a recent study on insecure employment in the Western population found that workers with significant social support reported lower levels of psychological stress. Nonetheless, when workers receive an excessive amount of social support, their psychological stress level about insecure work remains rather high (Belvis, 2022). Because social supports entail communication, excessively discussing unfavourable events on social networks may have a detrimental effect, increasing tensions in persons who are already stressed. Moreover, within the precarious employments, individuals found to have lesser social supports as compared to their counterparts in Spain as they used to be

surrounded by individuals with similar social-economic status (Belvis, 2022). Therefore, they may perceive limited social assistance when necessary, affecting the effect of social support among precarious employments. Given the scarcity of research on precarious employment in Malaysia, it is uncertain how far this finding may be extrapolated to the Malaysian setting. As a result, the purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between social support and psychological well-being among Malaysian precarious workers.

Conceptual Framework

This current study focuses on the two potential variables that contribute to the psychological well-being for precarious workers, which are job insecurity and perceived social support. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, individuals must satisfy their needs before progressing to higher-level needs. These needs will motivate their progress in life. Psychological well-being can be achieved when the needs and concerns are met. Job insecurity and perceived social support are some of the concerns for most precarious workers to progress in their life and achieve their psychological well-being. Specifically, stable work is a conditional resource that employees deemed valuable as it also crucial for the other resources such as basic human needs, social status (Jahoda, 1981). When job insecurity occurs, it acts as a stressor that influence ones' employment with threatened loss, so does the effect on income (Hellgren et al., 1999). Social supports can be deemed as part of the belongings needs. Individuals need to acquire friendships, maintain social interaction as their life functioning. Both of these need to fulfil before attaining greater level of needs or be self-actualized. This model could potentially add-on to the findings and literature on the theoretical framework which emphasizes improving the psychological well-being of precarious workers in Malaysia, an individual needs to pay attention to their social supports and identify any possibilities that contribute to job insecurity. Besides that, this model also can be useful for the non-government, government, or practitioner policymaker to strengthen specific policies to help precarious workers, especially related to their psychological well-being.

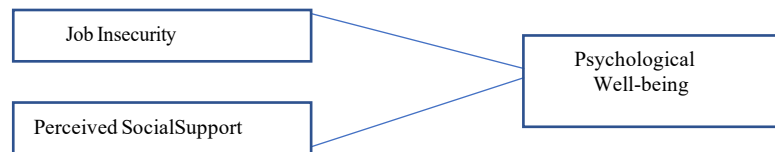


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Psychological Well-being

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This study employed a cross-sectional study design. It was quantitative research utilizing online questionnaires. The independent variables are job insecurity, and perceived social support, whereas the dependent variable is psychological well-being.

Participants

In the outset, 150 individuals were recruited for this study. Individuals who operate in precarious jobs, including as contract workers and freelancers, as well as Malaysian nationals, fit the inclusion criteria. Foreigners and persons who are currently employed or unemployed were excluded from this survey. The data was cleaned by removing three outliers. In the end, there were 147 responses, with 44 males (29.9%) and 103 females (70.1%). The participants ranged in age from 19 to 59 years old, with the mean of 28 years old. Most respondents were Malay (n=73; 49.7%), with 45.6% (n=67) being Chinese and 2.7% (n=4) being Indian and others (n=3; 2%). 56.5% (n=83) of the respondents were single, 32.7% (n=48) were married, 9.5% (n=14) were in a relationship, and 1.4% (n=2) were divorced. In terms of employment, the majority (n=79; 53.7%) worked on a contract basis, with 21.8% (n=32), 14.3% (n=21), 5.4% (n=8), 3.4% (n=5), and 1.4% (n=2) working as part-timers, self-employment, dispatched workers, others, and agent workers, respectively. Low-income respondents made up 108 respondents (73.5%) of the total, followed by middle-income respondents (n=33; 22.4%), and upper-income respondents (n=6; 4.1%). Finally, most precarious workers (n=109; 74.1%) had no responsibility for dependent children, while 38 (25.9%) had one or more dependents.

Table 1: Participants' Demographic Data

Variable	n	%	M	SD
Gender				
Male	44	29.9		
Female	103	70.1		
Age			28.35	6.90
Ethnicity				
Malay	73	49.7		
Chinese	67	45.6		
Indian	4	2.7		
Others	3	2.0		
Marital Status				
Married	48	32.7		
Single	83	56.5		

Divorced	2	1.4
In a relationship	14	9.5
Types of Employment		
Part-time Employment	32	21.8
Contract-based Employment	79	53.7
Dispatched Workers	8	5.4
Self-employment	21	14.3
Agent Workers	2	1.4
Others	5	3.4
Income		
Low-income Group	108	73.5
Middle-income Group	33	22.4
Upper-income Group	6	4.1
Dependent Children		
Yes	38	25.9
No	109	74.1

Note: n=number of cases; %=percentage, M=mean, SD=standard deviation

Procedures

Prior to the actual data collection, the ethical clearance approval was endorsed by the UTAR Scientific and Ethical Review Committee (U/SERC/116/2022). A self-administered online questionnaire was created through Qualtrics. Both convenience and snowballing sampling methods were used to recruit the sample of the study.

Instruments

The survey includes demographic factors (e.g., gender, age, nationality, income, number of dependents, and so on), followed by the Job Insecurity Scale (JIS) developed by Jung et al. (2021), the Multi-Dimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) developed by Zimet et al. (1988), and the WHO-5 Well-being Index (WHO-5) formed by WHO (1998). The JIS is specifically used to gauge how precarious workers perceive their level of job insecurity during Covid-19. The MPSS was used to assess social support perceived by precarious workers during the pandemic from three different sources of support: family, friends, and significant others, while the WHO-5 was used to assess psychological well-being among precarious workers. All three scales indicated good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values of .78, .89, and .87 in JIS, MPSS, and WHO-5, respectively.

Data Analysis

The data collected of this research was analyzed by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Prior to that, all the data was checked if all responses fit the inclusion criteria. Then, a normality test was executed to ensure the data fits the normality condition. Pearson Product-moment Correlation were used to analyze the correlation between job insecurity and perceived social support with psychological well-being. The direction and strengths of these relationships will be determined based on the manual from Pallant (2016).

■ 4.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Preliminary Analysis

Based on the normality test, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality indicates that the scores of WHO-5, $D(147) = .09$, $p < .05$ was significantly non-normally distributed. Despite this, the histograms showed a close relation to bell distribution curves. Normal QQ-Plots also revealed a logical straight line, indicating that the data was reasonably regularly distributed (Pallant, 2016). Moreover, the scores of JIS, $D(147) = .06$, $P > .05$, and the scores of MPSS, $D(147) = .05$, $p > .05$, were normally distributed, with the histograms and plots supported this notion. Hence, the parametric test would be carried out. There were 3 outliers occurred in the data of JIS, and MPSS, which were removed. After that, it is noticed that another 1 outlier occurred in the data of MPSS after running the normality test again. By referring to the 5% trimmed mean, the differences between 5% trimmed mean and mean values are considerably small. Hence, the only outlier remains.

H1: The Correlation between Job Insecurity and Psychological Well-being.

The correlation between job insecurity and psychological well-being showed a negative, small, and significant correlation between the two variables, $r = -.26$, $n = 147$, $p < .001$. Hence, the greater the job insecurity, the lower the psychological well-being.

Table 1: Correlations between Job Insecurity, and Psychological Well-being

Variables	M	SD	1	2
1. Job Insecurity	33.52	8.38	1	
2. Psychological Well-being	15.17	4.92	-.26**	1

**Correlation is significant at .01 level (2-tailed)

H2: The Correlation between Perceived Social Support and Psychological Well-being.

The correlation between social support and psychological well-being showed a positive, medium, and significant correlation between the two variables, $r = .42$, $n = 147$, $p < .001$. Hence, the greater the social support, the greater the psychological well-being.

Table 2: Correlations between Perceived Social Support, and Psychological Well-being

Variables	M	SD	1	2
1. Perceived Social Support	4.61	1.06	1	
2. Psychological Well-being	15.17	4.92	.42**	1

**Correlation is significant at .01 level (2-tailed)

4.0 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The current study aimed to examine the correlating factors of psychological well-being among Malaysian precarious workers. The results of the study supported the negative correlation between job insecurity and psychological well-being, and the positive correlation between perceived social support and psychological well-being, indicating that H1 and H2 are accepted.

Firstly, Malaysian precarious workers in this study reported relatively high job insecurity during the pandemic. This could be compounded by observing how organizations cut costs in Malaysia (Wilson et al., 2020) and the high jobless rate (Kaur, 2021). They are concerned about their future work prospects in this labour market. Another possibility is related to the nature of precarious employment, as most respondents worked on a contract basis. Given that some workers faced job instability because of not having their contract renewed (Matilla- Santander et al., 2021), Malaysian precarious workers may be locked in a similar predicament, heightening their job insecurity.

Furthermore, the study found that the more job uncertainty precarious workers have, the poorer their psychological well-being. According to prior study (Russo & Terraneo, 2020; Soelton et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2018), this could be due to the unpredictability of the future and a lack of control over the situation (Witte, 1999). Given that precarious individuals are often employed for a short period of time and are underpaid (Kreshpaj et al., 2020), this indicates how uncertain their situation is, putting them in a vulnerable position where they may lose their employment in the future during the pandemic. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1954), job stability is one of the most basic human needs. If it is not met, other wants, such as money, may suffer, preventing individuals from becoming self-actualized (Khari & Sinha, 2018). Given that the majority of respondents were low-income, and some were married, the dangers to their work could heighten their worry of losing their income and so being unable to sustain themselves and their families throughout the epidemic. However, because precarious employment restricts prospects and career progression (Belvis et al., 2022), Malaysian precarious workers may be unable to change the situation by finding a better job based on their precarious working experience. As a result, people are in a state of anxiety, worry, and concern about their overall living. Such unpleasant emotions then hamper their daily functioning due to a lack of refreshment and energy, harming their psychological well-being in the long run. However, the effect size of such correlation is considerably small, which could be said that they are adopting other powerful strategies to cope with the stress resulted from precarious employments.

Unlike Belvis et al. (2022) and Mirowsky and Ross (1986), Malaysian precarious workers reported relatively high perceived social support. This makes sense because Malaysians adhere to a collectivism culture in which harmonious interpersonal relationships are valued (Sumari et al., 2019). As individuals are getting used with the pandemic situation, social interaction is allowed hence, they may have time to devote to their social networks, building a helpful network. Furthermore, it was discovered that the greater the perceived social support of precarious workers, the greater their psychological well-being. This is consistent with earlier findings (Mellor et al., 2020; Menéndez-Espina et al., 2019), which show that social support is an important resource for individuals to relieve stress when working in hazardous jobs. When precarious employees face unfavourable circumstances, they know they have a supporting social network which they can seek help when needed. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1954), precarious workers feel welcomed and belonged to a trusted social group, which satisfies their need for love and belonging. They then understand how to use these support systems to overcome adversity through helpful conversation, leaving them feeling cared for and reassured, reducing negative emotions and improving their psychological well-being (Watson et al., 2021).

Some limitations must be considered in the future. First, the sample size of precarious employees is very small, limiting the generalizability of the results because it is nowhere near Malaysia's population. This can be enhanced by recruiting more focused people. Second, this study was unable to investigate the causation relationship between psychological well-being and its component. Future research should use a mixed method rather than a cross-sectional design to try to understand how factors affect precarious workers' psychological well-being and what the likely cause of this link is, or to see if there is a moderating effect between these variables given that job insecurity has a minor impact on precarious workers' psychological well-being. Thirdly, there is an uneven distribution of participants selected based on age and type of job, which may favour the results. This should be avoided in future study to obtain more realistic and accurate conclusions about the precarious employment. Finally, it is uncertain which social supports are most essential in predicting the psychological well-being of precarious employees. Further research, such as multiple regression, can be conducted in the future to determine which social supports are more powerful to them.

5.0 CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to investigate the factors correlated with Malaysian precarious employees. It adds to the limited literature by using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to analyze psychological well-being determinants among precarious workers. The findings also give non-government, government, or practitioner policymaker with an in-depth understanding of how considerable job uncertainty might affect precarious workers' psychological well-being. As a result, more focus may be placed on boosting the well-being of precarious workers, with critical activities such as implementing employment protection programs and giving social insurance for precarious workers, in the hopes of improving job security and well-being among precarious workers. Second, this result emphasizes the necessity of having social supports for precarious workers, which family members, friends, and significant others can do their part to demonstrate care and affection to someone who is engaged in insecure employments thus, enhancing their psychological well-being. However, future research can consider doing further analysis such to examine which social supports is most important to workers, and to see if social supports carry moderating effects in these relationships.

Acknowledgment

This research was sponsored by UTARRF, an internal grant under Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman.

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