Prevalence and predictors for musculoskeletal discomfort in Malaysian office workers: Investigating explanatory factors for a developing country

Abstract

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are a major occupational health issue for workers in developed and developing countries, including Malaysia. Most research related to MSDs has been undertaken in developed countries; given the different regulatory and cultural practices it is plausible that contributions of hazard and risk factors may be different. A population of Malaysian public service office workers were surveyed (N = 417, 65.5% response rate) to determine prevalence and associated predictors of MSD discomfort. The 6-month period prevalence of MSD discomfort was 92.8% (95%CI = 90.2–95.2%). Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC) analyses was used to compare a range of models and determine a model of best fit. Contributions associated with MSD discomfort in the final model consisted of physical demands (61%), workload (14%), gender (13%), work-home balance (9%) and psychosocial factors (3%). Factors associated with MSD discomfort were similar in developed and developing countries but the relative contribution of factors was different, providing insight into future development of risk management strategies.