

Workstyle and Musculoskeletal Discomfort (MSD): Exploring the Influence of Work Culture in Malaysia

Abstract

Purpose Workstyle can be defined as an individual pattern of cognitions, behaviours and physiological reactivity that can occur while performing job tasks. Workstyle has been associated with the development of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) amongst office workers in developed countries. However, little is known about the contribution of workstyle on MSDs in developing countries such as Malaysia. The objective of this cross-sectional study was to examine the relationship between workstyle and musculoskeletal discomfort in a sample of office workers in Malaysia. Methods Office workers (N = 417; response rate 65.5 %) from four organisations completed a survey measuring physical and psychosocial hazards, job satisfaction, work-life balance, workstyle, and MSD discomfort levels. Hierarchical regression analyses were undertaken to examine predictors associated with self-reported musculoskeletal discomfort, and more specifically the relationship between workstyle and MSD discomfort. Results Musculoskeletal discomfort was significantly associated with working through pain, mental health, physical demands, gender and work-life balance ($R^2 = 50.2$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.48$; $F(13, 324) = 25.09$, $p = 0.001$). Working through pain is the strongest risk factor associated with MSD discomfort ($\beta = 0.49$, $p = 0.001$) compared to other potential risk factors. Conclusions Working through pain is influenced by work, social culture and religious beliefs. Workplace MSDs interventions that focus on the impact of physical and psychosocial hazards with emphasis on addressing adverse workstyles should take into account aspects related to work and social culture of the target population. Changes are recommended at both employee and management levels such as better communications and understanding concerning workplace problems with regards to minimizing MSDs at work. © 2015 Springer Science+Business Media New York.