



Beyond the Stethoscope: Unpacking the Stress of Female Specialists, Balancing Family and Career

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ABSTRACT

Background:

In 2018, the Ministry of Health Malaysia reported 45% of its specialists were female. Studies have shown that female specialists experience stress differently than their male counterparts. Focus groups have identified three major sources of stress in female specialists: high expectations, multiple roles, and work environment. This survey investigates the unique experiences of stress among female specialists with families in Malaysia, highlighting the multifactorial nature of their challenges.

Method:

A single-question survey was created with Mentimeter®: “What's your top stressor in the work-family juggling act?”. Female specialists with children were invited to fill out the survey. Participants were allowed to enter up to three separate answers. Answers were then grouped into categories.

Results:

A total of 50 female specialists responded to the survey. We obtained 124 stressors from the participants, which were further categorised into workplace factors, home-related issues, and self-related concerns. Workplace factors accounted for the majority of stressors (50%), followed by home-related issues (35.5%) and self-related concerns (14.5%). Among the stressors at the workplace include excessive workload and too much time at work. Regarding home-related issues, stressors include parenting and house chores. As for self-related concerns, the stressors are mainly mental health and multitasking.



Conclusion:

The unique challenges many female specialists encounter include high workload, childcare and household chores. The intricate interplay of these factors leads to heightened stress levels, which may result in burnout and depression, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions. Our study highlights the necessity for further research on adaptability and coping skills among female specialists with families in Malaysia. By understanding the specific challenges faced by female specialists, we can enhance their well-being and effectiveness in the healthcare system, ultimately benefiting both the specialists, their families, and the patients they serve.

(287 words)

Keywords: Female Specialists; Mental illness; Malaysia; Stress; Work-life Balance

Biodata:

Dr Nurul Firdausi is a rehabilitation medicine specialist with interest in Paediatric Rehabilitation.

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Each of them is a mother, a medical lecturer, and a specialist dedicated to seeing a brighter world.