



KEMENTERIAN SUMBER MANUSIA

“

# KERATAN AKHBAR KESUMA”

AHAD  
6 OKTOBER 2024



Rumah pusaka arwah ayah musnah dibakar adik selepas bunuh abang

## 'Kami sekeluarga masih trauma'

Oleh SHAMSUL KAMAL  
AMARUDIN

**LUMUT** – Seorang wanita sedih selepas rumah pusaka yang diduduki lebih 30 tahun lalu musnah angkara perbuatan adik lelakinya yang membakar kediaman itu baru-baru ini.

Noralizawati Mohd. Taib, 47, berkata, dia dan ibunya, Azizah Uda, 71, sehingga kini masih trauma kerana tidak menyangka kejadian seperti itu berlaku.

"Rumah inilah satu-satunya harta peninggalan arwah ayah buat kami sekeluarga, tetapi sekarang sudah rosak teruk dengan pendawalan elektrik musnah 100 peratus," katanya di Taman Muhibbah, Sitiawan dekat sini petang kelmarin.

Dalam kejadian pada 25 September lalu, sebelum membakar ruang tamu rumah itu, adik lelaki wanita itu membunuh abangnya yang sedang tidur di ruang tamu rumah.

Suspek dipercayai menggunakan petrol untuk membakar ruang tamu rumah tersebut.

Pada Selasa lalu, suspek didakwa di Mahkamah Majistret



**MOHD. SHAPERI (kiri)** menyerahkan baucar faedah pengebumian jenazah kepada Azizah (dua dari kanan) di rumah mereka di Taman Muhibbah, Sitiawan kelmarin.

Seri Manjung di bawah Seksyen 302 Kanun Keseksaan kerana membunuh dan diarahkan menjalani pemeriksaan kesihatan di Hospital Bahagia Ulu Kinta.

Terdahulu, Azizah meneri-

ma baucar faedah pengurusan jenazah bernilai RM3,000 serta sumbangan barangan keperluan harian daripada Pertubuhan Keselamatan Sosial (Perkeso).

Pengurus Perkeso Manjung, Mohd. Shaperi Md. Salleh hadir bagi menyampaikan sumbangan dan memaklumkan, anak bongsu mangsa berusia 18 tahun turut menerima Faedah Pencen Penakat sehingga usianya mencecah 21 tahun.

Menurut Noralizawati, mangsa yang juga anak kedua daripada enam beradik telah berpisah dengan isterinya beberapa tahun lalu dan kesemua tiga anaknya tinggal bersama bekas isteri di Ipoh.

Dia yang juga ibu tunggal memberitahu, mereka sekeluarga termasuk dua anaknya, dua adiknya serta ibu mereka, kini terpaksa menyewa rumah di kawasan berhampiran dengan kadar RM700 sebulan.

Jelasnya, sehari sebelum kejadian, mereka sekeluarga telah meminta mangsa untuk membawa suspek berjumpa pakar psikiatri berdasarkan keadaan kesihatannya dan bercadang membawanya pada pagi sebelum insiden tragis itu berlaku.

**KERATAN Kosmo!**  
26 September 2024.



# Flushing out toxic workplaces

Govt gets serious about tackling bullying and its effects on mental health

By GERALDINE TONG  
and SYED UMAR ARIFF  
sunday@thestar.com.my

**PETALING JAYA:** About 15,000 'Occupational Mental Health First Aiders' are being trained nationwide as Malaysia outlined rigorous measures to improve mental health management and ensure employees are not subject to a toxic environment at work.

"Our goal is to have at least one Occupational Mental Health First Aider in every office, to foster a better mental health environment in workplaces," Human Resources Minister Steven Sim said.

He added that while the Flexible Work Arrangement was incorporated into the Employment Act last year, which could improve working conditions, many employers and workers remain uncertain about how to implement it effectively.

"Although the provision has been in force since last year, we've noticed that many of them are unclear about how to move forward.

"To address this, we are developing a comprehensive guideline. Agencies such as the Labour Department, Talent Corp, and MyFutureJobs will actively promote its implementation," he told *Sunday Star*.

Sim said he had instructed that

the 2022 amendments to the Occupational Safety and Health Act on June 1 be enforced after a two-year delay.

"A key aspect of this amendment is extending occupational safety and health regulations to all economic sectors, not just the 10 sectors previously covered. Ensuring a safe and healthy workplace will help reduce stress and improve workers' mental health," he added.

Sim was responding to questions about workplace bullying, which had been rising in Malaysia. Workplace bullying gained renewed attention following the apparent suicide of a specialist doctor from Lahad Datu Hospital in August.

Malaysian Employers Federation president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman, emphasised that workers have avenues to report workplace bullying.

"Every workplace has clear rules and guidelines. The human resource (HR) department has employee relations officers whose role is to guide and support staff.

"Any employee facing bullying can file a complaint with this department," he said.

Companies often have industrial relations departments to educate employees on workplace laws, as well as suggestion or complaint boxes managed by the



**Ever present problem:**

Studies across various industries in 2013 and 2019 both found that at least a quarter of respondents admitted to being victims of workplace bullying. Photo for illustrative purposes.

— SIA HONG  
KIAU/The Star

HR or CEO's office, he added.

Syed Hussain maintained that companies do not tolerate bullying or sexual harassment.

"If found guilty of such misconduct, your employment will be terminated. Employees can also file legal suits against perpetrators," he said.

Despite numerous surveys on the subject, there is still no specific data or index that captures the full extent of workplace bullying

in Malaysia, said the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (Niosh), an agency under the Human Resources Ministry.

Niosh acknowledged that workplace bullying is a well-recognised problem with significant impacts on employees' mental health.

"We are working to better understand the extent of this issue through future studies and collaborative efforts," the agency said.

Complaints about workplace bullying cut across industries. Studies conducted in 2013 and 2019 both found that at least a quarter of respondents admitted to being victims of workplace bullying.

For example, the *Global Business and Management Research* journal highlighted a 2019 survey which found that 39% of 5,235 respondents from 47 companies in Malaysia had experienced bullying in the workplace.

A 2013 study, conducted by three researchers from Queen's University Belfast, including Malaysian researcher Dr Yuzana Mohd Yusop, found that 42.6% of workers in the healthcare industry reported facing "injustice in their organisations."

Last year, the Malaysian Bar adopted a resolution during its annual general meeting, calling for workplace bullying to be classified as misconduct under Section 94(3) of the Legal Profession Act.

"Workplace bullying is a serious issue in the legal profession, as evidenced by the numerous complaints from lawyers, pupils in chambers, and legal staff in Malaysia," said the Malaysian Bar.

**FOR MORE:**  
See pages 16 and 17

Stories by GERALDINE TONG  
and SYED UMAR ARIFF  
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ON average, almost 90,000 hours – or one-third – of your life will be spent at work or in an office.

That's a large chunk of our lifetime, and it is why we must be able to cultivate a good work environment for ourselves.

However, research has shown that many of us experience various stressors at work, which, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), include bullying and harassment.

And this is negatively impacting our mental health.

According to the WHO, 15% of working-age adults worldwide were estimated to have a mental disorder in 2019. In Malaysia, a 2018 survey by mental health organisation Relate Malaysia found that 29% of workers reported poor mental health conditions.

This phenomenon is not just detrimental to the individual employee: WHO estimates that globally, 12 billion working days are lost every year to depression and anxiety at the cost of US\$1 trillion (RM4.22 trillion) in lost productivity.

As such, the WHO has united with partners such as the World Federation for Mental Health to highlight the vital connection between mental health and work for this year's World Mental Health Day on Oct 10, which is themed "It is Time to Prioritise Mental Health in the Workplace".

The focus on mental health in the workplace is timely, as recently a specialist doctor in Lahad Datu Hospital, Sabah, allegedly took her own life; her family claim it was due to bullying in the workplace.

This tragic incident has reignited public discourse in Malaysia over the state of employees' mental health in the workplace and safeguarding against bullying and harassment.

Workplace bullying can have "profound and detrimental" effects on an employee's mental health, asserts Dr Saw Jo Anne, a clinical psychologist and senior lecturer in the Department of Psychiatry at Universiti Teknologi Mara.

"Past research has consistently shown that workplace bullying is related to an employee's mental health. It can lead to stress, anxiety and depression.

"Employees who are bullied

# Healthy workplaces for healthy minds

More needs to be done to minimise stressors on employees' mental health, especially bullying. *Sunday Star* looks at what could be done ahead of World Mental Health Day on Thursday, which will focus on workers' mental wellbeing at the workplace this year.

often experience a constant state of being fearful or feeling on edge while interacting with the bully.

"This may create a persistent state of stress and anxiety which may impact their overall wellbeing," she says.

Victims of workplace bullying might also isolate themselves because they fear further negative interactions or confrontations, which can exacerbate feelings of loneliness. This can then erode their confidence, leading them to doubt their abilities and self-worth.

"Over time, this creates a vicious cycle of low motivation, poor job efficiency, low enthusiasm and feelings of despair," Saw explains.

The mental health effects from the workplace run the risk of spilling over to the employee's home life as well, she adds.

"This eventually leads to dis-equilibrium in the family's well-being where maladaptive coping mechanisms with negative thoughts and emotions are brought home. This may jeopardise the employee's friendships or relationships as a sequelae of bullying."

## Addressing negative workplace culture

Bullying in the workplace is not as straightforward as one may think either.

Yelling at someone or physical violence are common perceptions of what constitutes bullying, but it goes deeper than that.

Dr Chua Sook Ning, clinical psychologist and Relate Malaysia founder, says workplace bullying could also be meant to put others down to prevent them from

climbing the ladder at work; or spreading rumours about someone to claim their resources, position, or even office space. Such behaviour is usually driven by resource scarcity and stress among employees at the workplace, she notes.

Because of this, the oft-mentioned advice for those whose mental health is suffering to seek professional therapy is not enough, Chua says.

The workplace culture itself needs to be changed and policies that promote psychological safety at the workplace should be developed.

"The company needs to address the bullying and the workplace environment that allows such behaviours. We need to move from an individual approach to an organisational one."

"Actions like reducing unrealis-

tic deadlines, increasing resources, and not using fear and humiliation to control employees can help decrease hostile bullying.

"In other words, there needs to be an honest, intentional, and systematic effort to address bullying and to promote workplace wellbeing," she says.

That is not to say working on the individual employee's mental wellbeing is not effective at all, but it will require a holistic approach from all parties involved.

Saw says companies can provide counselling services or employee assistance programmes to offer professional support for employees to process their experiences and develop coping strategies.

Educational employee wellness programmes and workshops will also help raise awareness and normalise proactive engagement with one's mental health.

Training and workshops specifically on bullying prevention, conflict resolution, and communication skills can also empower employees and promote a culture of respect and understanding within the workplace. Fostering a sense of community and reducing isolation in the workplace can be done by establishing peer support groups as well.

"By integrating these holistic support measures, organisations can create a more supportive environment that not only addresses the immediate effects of workplace bullying but also fosters longterm mental health and wellbeing," Saw says.



Among the ways bullying on the job can be tackled is to promote a culture of respect and understanding among employees and to address workplace cultures which may be allowing such incidents, say clinical psychologists. — Freepik

## Risks to mental health at work

Psychosocial risks at the workplace can include:

 Under-use of skills or being under-skilled for work	 Excessive workloads or work pace, understaffing	 Long, unsocial or inflexible hours
 Organisational culture that enables negative behaviours	 Limited support from colleagues or authoritarian supervision	 Conflicting home/work demands
 Unclear job role	 Discrimination and exclusion	 Violence, harassment or bullying
 Job insecurity, inadequate pay, or poor investment in career development	 Unsafe or poor physical working conditions	 Under- or over-promotion

Source: WHO

The Stargraphics

### Government intervention

In addressing the case of the doctor based in Lahad Datu Hospital, Health Minister Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad said he has had a zero-tolerance approach to bullying since his first stint in the ministry in 2018.

To prove his words, he set up an independent special task force to not only investigate the doctor's death but also examine the work culture at the hospital.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (Niosh) under the Human Resources Ministry also acknowledges that the data suggests mental health challenges in the workplace are a significant concern that requires continuous attention and proactive measures.

As such, Niosh, in collaboration with the National Centre of Excellence for Mental Health, introduced an Occupational Psychological First Aid (Opfa) training programme in February to address the under-reporting of workplace mental health issues.

Only one psychosocial case was reported in the 2022 National Occupational Accident and Disease statistics, compared with over 5,000 physical cases.

"This is not because there are no mental illness cases, but instead it shows a lack of awareness about mental health and the possible solutions," said Human Resources Minister Steven Sim at the time.

The ministry also took it one step further by allocating RM12mil to sponsor the first 10,000 participants of the new training programme.

"This initiative aims to increase mental health literacy and provide essential tools to support workplace mental health through the Opfa-trained personnel," Niosh tells *Sunday Star*.

For those who are currently facing bullying in the workplace, Niosh suggests that they can utilise the "TALK" method as promoted by the Health Ministry.

"TALK" stands for Telling someone they trust about their problems, Asking for help when needed, Listening without judgement when others confide in them, and Knowing where to find professional help.

"Employees can seek support from their human resources department, workplace counsellors or external mental health professionals.

"By taking these steps, they can improve their mental well-being and seek solutions to their challenges," says Niosh.

By JOLANTA BURKE

THE World Health Organisation (WHO) has just published alarming statistics showing that employee mental health issues result in a US\$1 trillion (RM4.2 trillion) loss in productivity each year. The WHO has called on employers to take urgent action by introducing comprehensive well-being programmes to tackle the escalating mental health crisis in the workplace.

But the problem is that many workplace well-being programmes don't work.

A British study which looked at 46,336 employees from 233 organisations found there was no evidence that a range of common workplace well-being initiatives – including mindfulness and stress management classes, one-to-one mental health coaching, well-being apps or volunteering work – improved employee well-being.

So, despite companies investing over US\$60bil (RM253.2bil) annually worldwide in well-being programmes, they appear to make little impact.

There are a number of reasons why these programmes don't work – and understanding them is the only way companies will be able to make these programmes effective.

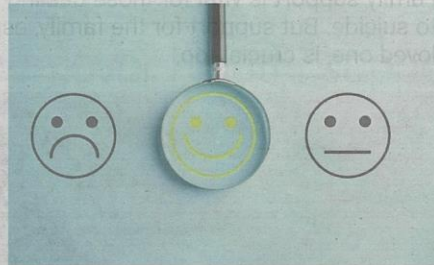
### Motivation crucial

Organisations often opt for easy-to-implement initiatives, such as hosting well-being talks or offering mindfulness or yoga classes. They then complain that employees don't attend or don't appreciate them.

Many employees say they don't attend these activities because they find them irrelevant, unhelpful, or they don't value them enough to attend – meaning their workplace has failed in identifying their needs.

Understanding what motivates people to participate in well-being programmes is crucial in improving their effectiveness. For example, one survey found employees were more interested in learning about healthy lifestyles than having a discussion about stress management. Although not directly related to mental well-being, prioritising these kinds of talks would have a greater effect on improving

## Here's how to make workplace wellbeing programmes better



Maximising a programme's impact requires careful attention to not only the content but also how it's implemented, says the writer. — 123rf

well-being in the end.

### Content matters

Well-being programmes tend to be more effective for people whose well-being is average or below average.

So when people with high levels of well-being participate in such programmes, they often see little benefit.

This can make it appear the programme isn't effective – when in reality, it still is for those who need it most.

This is why it's so important to determine what type of help employees need most when designing well-being programmes. For employees who aren't experiencing poor mental health, a programme that primarily addresses depression or anxiety may be less effective, as they're probably already practising many of the strategies such programmes would discuss.

But if the well-being programme goes beyond reducing symptoms and focuses on promoting flourishing, meaning and purpose in life, it could provide value to a broader audience. This is where a programme designed by an expert in positive psychology would be beneficial in workplaces.

Positive psychology is the science of well-being.

It focuses on building on the positive aspects of life that

make life worth living – rather than solely addressing symptoms of mental ill health, which affect only 10 per cent to 20 per cent of the population.

But positive psychology measures still have a positive impact on those who experience mental health issues at the same time. They include such activities as identifying and using your character strengths at work, rethinking your past events positively, learning optimism or practising gratitude.

The content of workplace well-being programmes is crucial. Avoiding generic self-help approaches will enhance their overall impact.

### Everyone is different

Factors such as whether an employee enjoys a specific well-being activity or programme, whether they believe that well-being can be changed, or their level of distress when starting a programme can all affect whether workplace well-being initiatives work.

Even a person's genetics can significantly affect whether such programmes have any impact. Research shows that people who have a higher genetic predisposition towards change are more likely to benefit disproportionately from these programmes – and their positive effect tends to last longer.

All of these factors should be carefully considered when designing a workplace well-being programme.

And given how difficult this will make it to design one that's effective, it's important employee well-being programmes are actually developed by experts in the field – not consultants who lack in-depth knowledge of psychology.

### Implementation often overlooked

The way a well-being programme is implemented is just as important as its content – though this aspect is often overlooked by well-being consultants.

For instance, overusing gratitude exercises can lead to disengagement from a programme. Similarly, offering too many well-being activity options can overwhelm participants and result in them discontinuing the programme.

Maximising the impact a well-being programme has in the workplace requires careful attention to not only the content but also how it's implemented.

There are many nuances involved in designing a workplace well-being programme. Employers must ensure the programmes they offer not only promote well-being but also avoid causing unintended harm to others in the process.

Consulting experts who know the nuances of psychology and of well-being programmes is key, as they will ensure programmes will be effective and helpful.

Programmes that combine positive psychology and life-style medicine (which focus on helping people improve their health and fitness) may be particularly beneficial in workplaces. – The Conversation

Jolanta Burke is a senior lecturer at the Centre for Positive Health Sciences, RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences in Ireland.

## Government measures for better mental health at work

CONCERTED efforts are in place to ensure better mental health management at the workplace in line with the 2020-2025 National Strategic Plan for Mental Health.

Human Resource Minister Steven Sim says ongoing efforts include strengthening mental health resources – as listed in the national strategic plan – to train 10,000 mental health first aiders nationwide for free at the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOOSH); this is a part of a campaign to ensure better mental health management at the workplace.

He says the Occupational Mental Health First Aid course takes three days and aims to



Sim says at least 10,000 workers nationwide will be trained as mental health first aiders.

train employees to provide mental health first aid to their colleagues.

"We are training them for

free for employees throughout the country. It will cost NIOOSH [which developed the programme] RM12mil or RM1,200 per pax.

As of now, despite its initial 10,000 participation target, almost 15,000 have been registered to undergo the course.

"We aim to have at least one occupational mental health first aider in every office to ensure a better mental health environment in our workplaces," Sim says.

At the same time, Sim reiterates that the implementation last year of Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA) in the Employment Act 1955 can help to enhance working conditions for workers.

"What we want is good industrial relations where employers must understand the situation of workers, and we see FWA as one of the methods to enable workers to have a better work environment, especially [when it comes to enduring] traffic hours or the need for career care tasks," Sim had said in April.

FWA allows employees to request flexible working hours from their employers but the approval will be subject to their terms of employment as well as the impact on productivity, among others.

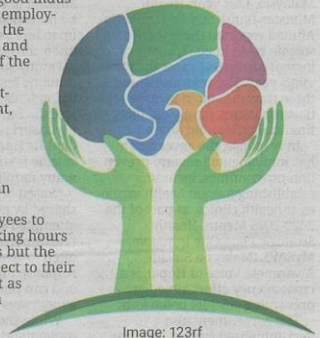


Image: 123rf