Chapter 6
Delivery Workers, COVID–19, and Job Burnout

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ABSTRACT

In the age of COVID-19, couriers are one of the jobs that have been categorised as essential; while other jobs have changed to working from home if they can, couriers and other essential workers still need to carry out their tasks as usual in order to maintain a semblance of normalcy for others. Yet, problems previously experienced by couriers have instead been made worse by COVID-19, such as the prevalence of overwork becoming more common as the demand of online shopping increases. As a result, job burnout has become more pronounced in this new norm. In view of this, exploratory research was conducted by reviewing various literature surrounding job burnout and courier work in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings are then analysed using Ishikawa's fishbone diagram, which are then categorised into four interlinked themes of environmental, psychological, physical, and financial factors. Afterwards, a discussion was made to further detail the extent of these factors towards job burnout, with recommendations being made to potentially remedy these factors.

1. INTRODUCTION

It can be said that COVID-19 has ushered in a new era within human history. In the span of a few months only, COVID-19 was able to rapidly spread throughout the world, surpassing 238 million infections on 13 October 2021 (CGTN, 2021). Despite our vast experience in handling previous pandemics (i.e., SARS and Ebola)

and repeated warnings from the World Health Organisation that another pandemic was imminent, governments and global health authorities were still unprepared for COVID-19 (WHO, 2017).

According to Ciotti et al. (2020), a COVID-19 positive patient can unknowingly transmit the virus via respiratory, saliva and ocular routes of the body, with an incubation period of about 6 to 14 days. Due to this reason, health authorities recommend restrictions to movements in order to avoid such incidents. Following this advice, global governments have been issuing nation-wide lockdowns to limit human-to-human interactions as one of the attempts to curb the spread of the virus (Vieira, 2020). By limiting movement, economic and social activities effectively paused, thereby affecting economies, supply chains and businesses as both workers and consumers are forced to stay indoors. As a result, Bhatti et al. (2020) observed that an increasing number of brick-and-mortar establishments - including food retailers and supermarkets – have been transitioning into e-commerce to adapt to this "new norm". This trend also coincides with the increasing usage of technology, such as using food delivery apps to continue serving food amidst a lockdown (Zanetta et al., 2021; Almunawar et al., 2018; Anshari et al., 2021c; Anshari & Hamdan, 2022a). Although, even before the current COVID-19 pandemic, online retailing has already been seeing an upward trend due to the accessibility of digital e-payments (Roggeveen & Sethuraman, 2020). Regardless, the COVID-19 pandemic is said to have changed the typical processes of the retail industry, with many firms rethinking their operations in order to survive in the current environment (Roggeveen and Sethuraman, 2020).

In order to lower the infected cases and safeguard the majority of the population, most countries have urged businesses to apply a work-from-home strategy, but this strategy is not applicable to every industry as workers that are deemed essential are still required to work such as health care, law enforcement, education, supermarket and even delivery workers (Reid et al., 2020; Almunawar et al., 2012; Anshari 2021). They are the employees whose efforts are critical to the preservation of societies' fabric (Reid et al., 2020; Rosli et al., 2022). However, many of these essential workers are negatively affected by the change in work environment due to COVID-19 because not only are they risking their lives, but they are physically and emotionally burdened due to added responsibilities (Rosa et al., 2020; Anshari et al., 2021a; Fithriyah, 2022).

Hence, this research will be focused on COVID-19 and essential workers specifically the courier workers since these workers not only are risking their lives by travelling to a lot of places including health hazard zones (zones that are known to have high cases of positive patients) but they are known to be underpaid and overworked (Olszewski, 2021; Mulyani et al., 2021; Almunawar & Anshari, 2022). These bad working conditions will consequently have negative effects on the workers such as

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