

Factors Associated with Depression among Thai Female Workers in the Electronics Industry

Supisara Charoenpaitoon MS*,
Ann Jirapongsuwan PhD**, Sopin Sangon PhD***,
Pratana Sativipawee PhD****, Surintorn Kalampakorn PhD**

* Baromrajanani College of Nursing, Bangkok, Thailand

** Department of Public Health Nursing, Faculty of Public Health, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand

*** School of Nursing, Ramathibodi Hospital, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand

**** Department of Biostatistics, Faculty of Public Health, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand

Objective: To determine the factors associated with depression among female workers in the electronics industry.

Material and Method: A cross-sectional study was performed during the period of March 2010. A sample of 444 females working in the electronics industry-located in Ayutthaya province, Thailand-were selected by stratified random sampling. Data were collected by a self-administered questionnaire. Depression was assessed through utilization of the Center Epidemiologic Studies Depression scale (CES-D). Data regarding socio-demographics, employment history, personal crises, family relationships, effort-reward imbalance and personal resources were included to assess all factors influencing depression. Logistic regression analysis was used to analyze the predictability of factors.

Results: The prevalence of depression in female workers was 28.8%. Multiple logistic regression analysis showed that those with poor family relationships, low reward and poor social support had 5.83 times (95% CI: 2.66-12.79), 2.58 times (95% CI: 1.20- 5.53) and 4.63 times (95% CI: 1.60 to 13.40) higher risk of suffering from depression, respectively.

Conclusion: The results suggest that improving family relationships, rewards and social support can be important strategies in the prevention of depression in female workers. Surveillance on depression in female workers should be conducted in the industry. Existing rewards should be reviewed and family relationships and social support should be enhanced, in order to decrease the impact of depression in female workers.

Keywords: Depression, Female workers, Effort-reward imbalance, Electronic industry

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Depression has been ranked as one of the top chronic health problems of the world and the most important mental health problem⁽¹⁾. The World Health Organization estimated that by 2020, depression would become the third health problem of the world and the burdens on economic and society due to depression will be similar to medical expenses for treatment of cardiovascular diseases⁽²⁾. In terms of gender, females were more likely to suffer from depression than males by a ratio of 2:1^(3,4). Depressed people are introverted, lack social support and they might face relationship problems. For the working population, suffering from depression without receiving treatment could affect

their work ability, sick leave, family relationships and lifestyles⁽⁵⁾. In the long run, they might lose their jobs and incur extra medical expenses. If such problems are not be solved, it would cause people to hurt themselves and commit suicide⁽⁶⁾.

Female workers currently tend to change their roles from housewife to working woman. This is because the local economic structure has increasingly changed from agricultural sector to industry and service sectors. About 80% of the female working population work in the manufacturing sector. Most of them had less education opportunities and come from lower-income families. They carry the burdens of supporting family debts and playing the role of mother and wife⁽⁷⁾.

The electronics industry has contributed to the significant export value and employ a high number of female workers⁽⁸⁾. Working in the electronics industry relies on advance technology. Employees need to wear special uniforms to assure product quality. Parts

Correspondence to:
Kalampakorn S, Department of Public Health Nursing, Faculty of Public Health, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand, 10400
Phone & Fax: 0-2354-8542
E-mail: phskl@mahidol.ac.th