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Health is a human right

## Up To 40% Of Doctors Bullied, 60% Of Junior Doctors Overworked: MMA Poll

By CodeBlue | 16 October 2023

An MMA survey among 728 doctors from the public and private sectors (two-thirds of whom were MOs) shows 30%-40% across all states reported bullying. Highest number of doctor bullying cases reported in Sarawak. 60% of junior doctors work overtime daily.



*Health deputy director-general (research and technical support) Dr Nor Fariza Ngah (left) and Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz (right) speak at a press conference in Kuala Lumpur on October 15, 2023, on the results of MMA's survey among doctors on bullying and overwork. Photo by MMA.*

The findings from a survey on Malaysian doctors conducted by the Malaysian Medical Association's (MMA) Section Concerning House Officers Medical Officers and Specialists (SCHOMOS) and its Junior Doctor Network (JDN) further confirms that bullying and harassment at health care facilities is prevalent and in fact widespread going by the survey results.

The MMA expresses deep concern over these findings as these issues, if left unaddressed, can have a significant impact on patient care especially in the public health care sector.

The survey which began on 15th September and concluded on 1st October found that 30 to 40 per cent of doctors across all states reported having experienced some form of bullying. The survey also found that victims are more likely not to file a complaint out of fear or are unsure how to go about it. Even so, no action was taken when they did.

A total of 253 cases of bullying was reported in the survey with the highest reported in Sarawak (15), Selangor (9) and Perak (8). However 197 were from unknown states. Sabah and Melaka have no confirmed cases of bullying according to the survey.

Bullying also affects doctors in all ranks with 168 medical officers affected, while 50 per cent of house officers and specialists who participated in the survey reported the same.

A total of 728 Malaysian doctors from the public and private health care sector participated in the survey. Of the total, 476 were medical officers, 207 were specialists/consultants and 46 were house officers.

The survey also found that most Malaysian doctors are overworked, with junior doctors being the most affected.

The survey found that 60 per cent of junior doctors (under two years' experience) work overtime everyday, compared to 20 per cent of doctors beyond two years' experience. Another 30 to 40 per cent still work overtime at least three times a week.

As for the frequency of Malaysian doctors working overtime, 35 per cent of doctors work overtime one to two times per week, 32 per cent work overtime three to four times per week, 24 per cent everyday, and 9 per cent never.

Although it may seem that the number of doctors participating may only be a small percentage of doctors from the entire health care system, these findings are nevertheless significant. In regards to bullying, these findings may be just the tip of the iceberg as many others might be suffering in silence. States with no reports of bullying does not mean there aren't any cases.

With the resignation rate among Malaysian contract doctors rising by a staggering 1,131 per cent in the last 6 years (2017-2022) as reported in the media, it is imperative that MOH urgently take proactive measures to ensure all necessary improvements in the work culture at all government health care facilities.

Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz is the president of the Malaysian Medical Association.