

## PAPER NAME

**Impact of psychosocial stress COVID-19 on job satisfaction: Jobstress and job insecurity as mediatio**

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## WORD COUNT

**11668 Words**

## CHARACTER COUNT

**63278 Characters**

## PAGE COUNT

**30 Pages**

## FILE SIZE

**550.5KB**

## SUBMISSION DATE

**Jan 30, 2024 9:29 AM GMT+7**

## REPORT DATE

**Jan 30, 2024 9:30 AM GMT+7**

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## Impact of psychosocial stress COVID-19 on job satisfaction: Job stress and job insecurity as mediation variables

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History:

Received 09-16-2022

Revised 04-29-2023

Accepted 05-02-2023

#### Kata Kunci:

Tekanan psikososial, tekanan kerja, ketidakamanan kerja, kepuasan kerja, pandemi

#### Keywords:

Psychosocial stress, job satisfaction, job stress, job insecurity, pandemic

### ABSTRAK

1 Di masa pandemi, lingkungan sekitar karyawan seperti: rekan kerja, pelanggan dan pemasok dianggap aspek pembawa virus yang dapat membahayakan nyawanya. Karyawan juga merasakan ketakutan pada dirinya sendiri akan membawa virus dan menularkan sekitarnya. Kondisi ini disebut tekanan psychosocial. Tujuan Penelitian ini berusaha membuktikan secara empiris bagaimana tekanan psychosocial dampak COVID-19 mampu mempengaruhi kepuasan kerja karyawan. Dengan menambahkan variabel job stress dan job insecurity sebagai variabel yang diuji secara tidak langsung. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kuantitatif dengan data yang didapat dari teknik snowball sampling pada karyawan penjualan langsung di Surabaya. Dari populasi tak terhingga didapatkan 237 sampel. Temuan menunjukkan tidak adanya pengaruh langsung antara dampak psychosocial stress COVID-19 terhadap kepuasan kerja karyawan. Tetapi ketika menambahkan variabel pengujian tidak langsung yaitu job insecurity dan job stress menunjukkan hasil yang signifikan. Artinya, penelitian ini berkontribusi memaparkan temuan bahwa karakteristik karyawan penjualan langsung di Surabaya setuju merasakan dampak tekanan psikososial karena COVID-19 tetapi kondisi tersebut tidak mempengaruhi puas tidaknya mereka bekerja. Tetapi ketika mereka merasa insecure/ketakamanan atas pekerjaannya dan adanya tekanan akan tuntutan pekerjaan, mereka merasakan ketidakpuasan dalam menjalani pekerjaannya. Temuan signifikansi teoritis ini diharapkan dapat memberikan kontribusi teoritis dalam mengelola manajemen stres karyawan dimasa penuh guncangan saat ini.

### ABSTRACT

5 During a pandemic, the environment around employees is considered a virus carrier, which can endanger their lives. Employees also fear that they will carry the virus and infect their surroundings. This condition is called psychosocial stress. This

study aims to prove empirically how psychosocial stress from the impact of COVID-19 can affect employee job satisfaction. Add the variables of job stress and job insecurity as the variables tested indirectly. This study uses a quantitative method with data from the snowball sampling technique on direct sales employees in Surabaya. Two hundred thirty seven samples are obtained. The findings show no direct effect between the psychosocial stress impact of COVID-19 on employee job satisfaction. However, adding indirect test variables, namely job insecurity and job stress, shows significant results. That is, explains that the characteristics of employees in Surabaya agree that they feel the effects of psychosocial stress due to COVID-19. However, these conditions do not affect whether they are satisfied or not at work. Nevertheless, when they feel insecure about their job, and there is stress from work, they feel unsatisfied. The findings of this research provide a theoretical contribution to managing employee stress management in the current turbulent times.

## INTRODUCTION

The new normal era is a behaviour change to continue daily life activities with health protocols, such as wearing masks, washing hands, avoiding crowds, maintaining distance, applying cough and sneezing etiquette, and maintaining health. In early 2021, the Indonesian government also began to oblige its citizens to get the COVID-19 virus vaccine. The vaccination process was carried out in waves, starting with health workers, residents aged 60 years and over, civilians who worked outside the home, and civilians at home who were also visited by some vaccine officers to be vaccinated. This effort is expected to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and reduce the number of deaths due to COVID-19.

In practice, implementing the new normal for a country with 34 provinces is not as easy and fast as formulating it. It is a challenge for the regions in each region, especially Jakarta, Surabaya, and other big cities in Indonesia. In line with the data revealed by Sparrow *et al.* (2020) explained that the COVID-19 virus infected many residents of the city of Surabaya, and death data due to the COVID-19 virus was also high. Surabaya is not as dense as the city of Jakarta. Still, its community mobility activities are also high because Surabaya is the capital of East Java. Still, there are also several factories/manufacturing industries, education centers, and several provincial offices in Surabaya. This condition is particular because big cities are conducive to developing the virus during the pandemic. International evidence suggests that this is not only due to population density but also to mobility, connectivity, and economic activity in large cities (Hsu, 2020).

Since the establishment of the new normal, economic activities in Surabaya have begun to rise by following health protocol procedures. Unfortunately, the business industry is not fully running as before, regulations will limit mobilization, maintain distance, limit the number of employees who work from an office, and the

existence of work from the home policy are obstacles for companies in Surabaya not being able to operate freely as before the pandemic.

But on the other hand, some work units in the company are not fully able to take advantage of online sales activities, telemarketing, or remote work. Some still have to enter the office because the production process uses machines. They have to deliver goods to customers and continue to carry out the direct sales process because it is Business to Business (B2B) (Martey *et al.*, 2020). During the pandemic, the environment around employees, such as co-workers, customers, and suppliers, is considered a carrier of the virus that can endanger their lives. The employee also feels fear of himself carrying the virus and infecting the surroundings. This condition is the cause of employees experiencing psychosocial stress from an anxious work environment (Yang *et al.*, 2020).

Psychosocial stress itself is a perceived pressure, referring to the phenomenon of something that occurs in the surrounding environment (Chen *et al.*, 2021; Danielsson *et al.*, 2012), which ultimately generates anxiety and depression (Kim & Lee, 2021; Yang *et al.*, 2020) and further can be attributed to the risk of causing cardiovascular disease (Chen *et al.*, 2021). Stressors of psychosocial stress are events that cause life changes, and these events require individuals to adapt and cope with situations and life changes (Quittkat *et al.*, 2020).

On the other hand, Karlsson *et al.* (2020); Kim *et al.* (2010) proved that employees who work in an environment that is perceived to be unsafe, feel depressed and unhappy tend to reduce their job satisfaction. Previous research has also shown that job satisfaction is closely related to employees' mental health. Employee job satisfaction needs to be maintained to maintain the company's performance. The company will survive even in a state of shock when its employees always feel enough for what it provides. Therefore, this study provides empirical evidence of the mechanism of the relationship that occurs between psychosocial stress conditions related to employee job satisfaction.

Meanwhile, previous studies have shown that employee who feel job stress also influences their job satisfaction, especially in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic (Touré *et al.*, 2021; Yang *et al.*, 2020). Panic and worry about the risk of contracting the disease limit the movement of employees, becoming not optimal to carry out work duties. Still, employees must achieve the targets that the company has determined. Surely these forms perceived negative emotions and ends in unprofessional work.

Coupled with uncertain business conditions, it also causes employees to feel insecure about their future work (job insecurity). Employees are anxious about salary reductions or job dismissal (Aguiar-Quintana *et al.*, 2021; David *et al.*, 2021). Employees' anxiety and fear certainly affect how they work in the company, and feeling dissatisfied with their work (Johnson *et al.*, 2005; Nemteanu *et al.*, 2021).

Based on the description above, this study further argues that the psychosocial stress of employees during the pandemic forms negative emotions for what employees perceive towards the company, and employees are unsatisfied with the company. Employees always feel that they do not meet their expectations for whatever the company does, both in terms of policies and handling the impact of the pandemic. Furthermore, this study adds external factors that affect job satisfaction; job stress, and internal factors; the perception of job insecurity as a variable that is tested indirectly.

Furthermore, previous studies related to pandemic conditions and several other studies used a lot of health workers (Antoniou *et al.*, 2003; Said & El-Shafei, 2021) and teachers (Chitra, 2021; De Simone *et al.*, 2016) as a subject of research. Only a few that focus on company employees (Yang *et al.*, 2020) or even direct sales employee (Hartmann & Lussier, 2020). Direct sales employees have a high intensity of mobilization and an increased risk of meeting many people, which means that the risk of contracting some companies, direct salespeople spearhead the company's performance, and direct sales employees can increase company value (Martey *et al.*, 2020).

Therefore, this study uses direct sales employees, potential employees whose development needs to be maximized. Moreover, most companies in Surabaya are manufacturing companies, where most employees are productive employees and salespersons. Previous research has yet to focus on this situation, and this research tries to provide a different perspective. In addition, in-depth research on the psychosocial condition of employees is generally carried out in the field of psychology. This study tries to provide scientific findings about how the psychosocial stress conditions of employees relate to job satisfaction. This research seeks to provide scientific collaboration between psychology and business management. In the future, this research will be able to make a scientific contribution to an organizational framework that considers employee health, appropriate technology, and a broadly interrelated structural framework to understand the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and other critical conditions in the future.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

### Psychosocial stress

Psychosocial stress is the pressure felt by a person, referring to the phenomenon of something that happens to the surrounding environment (Chen *et al.*, 2021; Danielsson *et al.*, 2012), which ultimately generates anxiety and depression (Kim & Lee, 2021; Yang *et al.*, 2020) and further can be attributed to the risk of causing cardiovascular disease (Touré *et al.*, 2021). Conversely, a safe psychosocial environment can negatively influence a person's level of depression. A safe psychosocial environment is an environment with a wide spectrum of resources that a person needs in an organization (Hall *et al.*, 2013).

Yang *et al.* (2020) used several dimensions of psychosocial stress, such as difficulty concentrating, feelings of hopelessness, fatigue and feeling helpless, feelings of sadness, feelings of fear of contracting a virus or infecting it, and feelings of disappointment in the surrounding environment. These dimensions were developed into question indicators in the form of questionnaires that were measured using a Likert scale of 1-5.

The COVID-19 outbreak can greatly impact people's mental health due to exposure to the substance of psychosocial stress, where the environment brings a climate of fear of contracting and even dying (Brown *et al.*, 2020). Efforts to suppress the transmission of the virus also change the behavior patterns of daily life, affecting the community's psychological well-being. In the end, people refrained from leaving their homes, restricted mobilization, avoided public gatherings, were quarantined, and even had lockdowns. These restrictions increase a person's psychosocial stress (Kim & Lee, 2021).

### **Job Insecurity**

Facing the COVID-19 pandemic, where the situation is uncertain, a change in the way of life has caused several companies to also be adaptive in managing their businesses. Companies must furlough their employees to reduce the death rate due to the COVID-19 virus. Similarly, people's purchasing power is declining, and people tend to save money, resulting in many products returning to warehouses. The domino effect of this condition, the company ultimately carried out organizational downsizing, operational efficiency, salary reductions, and lay of some employees.

In addition, this pandemic era is closely related to digitalization, where product sales are already online, and office work can also be done online. Some large companies, in the end, dare to invest in information technology, which requires little human resources but facilitates work. These things lead to employee anxiety about the sustainability of their work. In the end, negative emotions and doubts arose over his current job.

Doubts about the sustainability of the job are called job insecurity. Job insecurity reflects threats (Aguiar-Quintana *et al.*, 2021; Octafian & Nugraheni, 2022; Vo-Thanh *et al.*, 2021, 2022) and the stability of current work. Feelings of insecurity over the future of their work. The COVID-19 pandemic has reduced employee involvement in their work, causing feelings of quitting or being laid off. In more detail, Shoss (2017) explained the indicators of employees feeling insecure in their work: the threat to their work, the decline in economic resilience, and the emergence of individual psychological vulnerabilities.

### **Job Stress**

Job stress is a human psychological response due to job requirements that are considered beyond the limits of their abilities; most of these conditions are accepted

as negative reactions such as the onset of feelings of anxiety over work, physical fatigue, or psychic feelings of fatigue (Melanie *et al.*, 2011; Yang *et al.*, 2020). In previous research, Raheem *et al.* (2020); Yaacob & Long (2015) explained that work pressure is the inability of employees to cope with work pressures due to the incompatibility of employees with the demands expected by the company. Work stress is integral to an employee's work and personal life (Masood, 2018).

The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the circumstances that affect employee work pressures (Said & El-Shafei, 2021). During the pandemic, several company employees are still doing face-to-face business activities, such as meeting customers and delivering products to customers. These activities are an effort to spin the economy and save the company from bankruptcy. That's why job stress related to COVID-19 is an important indicator that causes mental illness in employees, such as the cause of anxiety about to be infected and depression in meeting the company targets.

### **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is a broad concept with various definitions. However, job satisfaction cannot be separated from the positive feelings and attitudes of individuals towards the work for which they are responsible. On the contrary, negative and unpleasant attitudes towards work indicate job dissatisfaction (Alrawashdeh *et al.*, 2021; Chanana, 2021; Walker *et al.*, 1977; Weiss, 2002) state that job satisfaction is an attitude defined and operationalized in the approach of social psychology. The attitude shown is an evaluation or evaluative assessment of the object of the attitude that can be seen. Job satisfaction is considered a good indicator of employee well-being. A high level of well-being makes a highly profitable contribution to the organization. Job satisfaction arises from meeting employee needs, thus triggering employee motivation to be more productive at work (Eliyana *et al.*, 2019). Employee needs are stimuli that can motivate employees to work comfortably and optimally (Sapta *et al.*, 2021).

In the COVID atmosphere, job satisfaction leads to how individuals continue to feel comfortable and positively working amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Job satisfaction can be described as how much employees still like their work and continue to be positive in carrying out their work professionally. On the contrary, COVID-19 pandemic could make employees unhappy and shows a negative attitude toward their work. Finally, the employees are dissatisfied with their work (Alrawashdeh *et al.*, 2021; Giménez-Espert *et al.*, 2020; Savitsky *et al.*, 2021).

### **Hypothesis Development**

#### **The Relationship between Psychosocial Stress and Job Insecurity**

The pandemic situation creates anxiety for workers about the continuity of their work in the future. Uncertain circumstances and unstable company conditions perceive employees to be ready when termination of employment is carried out (David *et al.*,

2021; Sparrow *et al.*, 2020). In addition, several large companies have decided to invest in information technology systems. The company supports the new normal era, providing a new perspective on all online activities.

Job insecurity arises from negative stressors to workers' physical, psychological, and health (Giménez-Espert *et al.*, 2020). In the end, these conditions give rise to job insecurity in employees. So, job insecurity becomes stronger when the surrounding conditions pressure workers, forming negative emotions. Therefore, the developed hypothesis as follows:

**H1:** Psychosocial stress has an effect on job insecurity.

### **Relationship between Psychosocial Stress and Job Satisfaction**

Previous research by Giménez-Espert *et al.* (2020) described the psychosocial risks experienced by employees when carrying out their work professionally. Employees felt anxious about the surrounding environment and worried about contracting or transmitting the virus. But work is a responsibility that demands professionalism (Kim & Lee, 2021; Tatsuse *et al.*, 2019).

Employees' feelings of job dissatisfaction arise because of psychosocial pressures around them (Levoska & Keinänen-Kiukaanniemi, 1994). Karlsson *et al.* (2020); Kim & Lee (2021) explained that employees who work in an environment that feels unsafe, feel depressed, and unhappy tend to reduce their job satisfaction. Previous research has also shown that job satisfaction is closely related to employees' mental health. During a pandemic, new ways have emerged so that work targets can be completed. In the process, this will give rise to negative emotions toward his work.

On the other hand, employees who feel psychologically safe and are not disturbed by the surrounding social conditions will form positive behavior and are more enthusiastic in carrying out all work demands Hall *et al.* (2013); Tatsuse *et al.* (2019); Jamal *et al.* (2021) proved that workload, lockdown, and family circumstances in the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in negative outputs such as fatigue and stress, but the autonomy of work schedules, work flexibility, and adequate technological resources can improve work-life balance. Employees with the better performance result in productivity and job satisfaction. Thus, the developed hypothesis as follows:

**H2:** Psychosocial stress has an effect job satisfaction.

### **The Relationship between Psychosocial Stress and Job Stress**

Emergencies in society are important stressors that can form psychosocial stress conditions. Psychosocial stress refers to an individual's negative response to the surrounding situation. Traumatic events are mostly related to war events, natural disasters, sudden losses, plagues, and extraordinary events that disturb, causing



physical and psychological injury and traumatic feelings for the people in them (Hossain *et al.*, 2021; Kim & Lee, 2021; WHO, 2020).

Edwards & Burnard (2003); Karlsson *et al.* (2020); Melanie *et al.* (2011) explained that the mental health status of employees affects employees' emotions at work. A positive and safe psychological climate can reduce workload or depression due to work so that employees show positive organizational behavior (Hall *et al.*, 2013). On the other hand, in the current pandemic conditions, the psychic climate leads to negative emotions. Previous research by Yang *et al.* (2020) explained the mechanism of psychosocial stress that can directly affect work. Employees who return to work after the lockdown period are afraid because the actual pandemic conditions have not ended. Employees are worried that they will be infected or infect the surrounding community.

Limited space for movement, fear, anxiety, changing life patterns, and feelings of suspicion shape the behavior of workers' less focus on their work. This condition certainly affects their work; employees feel pressured and become less professional in completing their responsibilities. As such, the developed hypothesis as follows:

**H3:** Psychosocial stress has an effect on job stress.

### **Relationship between Job insecurity and Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction plays a vital role in overcoming difficult times. Employees who are satisfied with their jobs will increase resilience in facing various crises, such as social, economic, and political disasters (Baker & Alshehri, 2020; Edwards & Burnard, 2003). When employees are satisfied with their work, they tend to do higher quality work, thus contributing more to the organization. Therefore, maintaining employee job satisfaction is highly recommended to maintain good organizational performance.

Previous research has shown that perceptions of employee job insecurity are related to job satisfaction (Nemteanu *et al.*, 2021). This research explains that an employee who feels there is no hope for his future job feels that the current job will not continue to cause dissatisfaction, leading to other adverse effects (Wilson *et al.*, 2020). It is easier to form employee morale if there is clarity in his mind about his career. Employees think, why give more effort to the company, even though it is still being determined that they will still work in the future? Furthermore, when employees perceive that the work they are doing at this time can give them good hopes for the future, and bring a sense of security for their future, employees tend to be satisfied with the work done. Thus, the developed hypothesis as follows:

**H4:** Job insecurity has an effect on job satisfaction.

### **Relationship between Job Stress and Job Satisfaction**

When a person feels pressure from his environment, the body responds by

releasing the hormone cortisol. The excessive use of the hormone cortisol will impact decreasing enthusiasm for activities and anxiety, which is ultimately called work stress. Furthermore, job stress makes employees less professional in their work, and this can result in a decrease in the level of employee job satisfaction (Anastasiou & Papakonstantinou, 2014; Antoniou *et al.*, 2003; Baker & Alshehri, 2020; Fiksdal *et al.*, 2019; Yaacob & Long, 2015).

Employees end up feeling less happy with their jobs. The demands of work in a pandemic condition that is still not over-shape negative emotions and attitudes of employees. Employees feel less flexible at work because of several health rules such as wearing masks, keeping a distance, avoiding crowds, and washing hands frequently. Where the employees work, especially direct sales, comes to crowded places (markets, shops, etc.). Johnson *et al.* (2005) also stated that employees who have to follow strict company rules every day would make employees easy to experience work stress, and employees do not feel happy at work which will be followed by low job satisfaction. Low emotional and feeling stress at work, reducing employee job satisfaction (Aghdasi *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, the developed hypothesis as follows:

**H5:** Job Stress has an effect on job satisfaction.

### **Job Insecurity Mediates the Relationship between Psychosocial Stress and Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction plays an important role in overcoming difficult times. When employees are satisfied with the work, they are doing they tend to do higher quality work, thus contributing more to the organization. Therefore, maintaining employee job satisfaction is highly recommended to maintain good organizational performance. Employees who are satisfied with their work will increase employee resilience in facing various crises, such as social, economic, and political disasters (Baker & Alshehri, 2020; Edwards & Burnard, 2003).

In a changing environment, such as during this pandemic, keeping individuals in the organization is challenging for management (Hidayat *et al.*, 2022; Laily *et al.*, 2022; Sari & Suhariadi, 2019). Human resource managers face challenges in maintaining appropriate levels of job satisfaction among employees (Nemteanu & Dabija, 2021), coordinating them, and promoting efficiency in the performance and execution of assigned tasks (Bartsch *et al.*, 2020). Karlsson *et al.* (2020); Kim *et al.* (2010) explained that employees who work in an environment that feels unsafe, feel depressed, and unhappy tend to reduce their job satisfaction. Previous research has also shown that job satisfaction is closely related to employees' mental health. The more employees feel anxious about the surrounding environment more employees feel dissatisfied with their work.

In a pandemic, employees are also afraid of the economic downturn—a

decrease in people's purchasing power. The future of his work and the sustainability of his work are still in doubt. In this study, employees' perceptions of job insecurity will be indirectly tested on the relationship between psychosocial stress felt by employees and job satisfaction. Thus, the developed hypothesis as follows:

**H6:** Job insecurity mediates the relationship between psychosocial stress and job satisfaction.

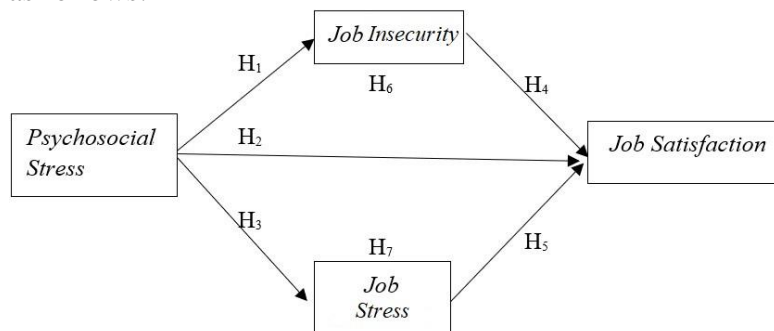
### Job Stress Mediates the Relationship of Psychosocial Stress and Job Satisfaction

Job stress, or occupational stress, is defined as negative emotional experiences, such as frustration, worry, anxiety, and depression related to work-related factors (Kyriacou, 2001; Yaacob & Long, 2015). Employees' inability to cope with work demands causes psychological stress and illness for individuals (Edwards & Burnard, 2003). Jain & Cooper (2012); Raheem *et al.* (2020) also explain that work stress is created by excessive pressure and demands placed on employees by the organization or pressure due to the surrounding environment that is considered threatening.

Previous studies have described how job stress can affect employee job satisfaction (Antoniou *et al.*, 2003; Chitra, 2021; Said & El-Shafei, 2021). Fixed work demands, limited ways of working as before the pandemic, and increasing sales targets will increase stress levels among employees, finally, increased stress and pressure from the environment due to the COVID-19 pandemic can lead to job dissatisfaction (Martey *et al.*, 2020). Theoretically, job satisfaction greatly affects employee work performance (Eliyana *et al.*, 2019). An organization with more satisfied employees tends to be more effective and productive (Chen, 2006) and reduces the intensity for employees to resign (Said & El-Shafei, 2021). As such, the developed hypothesis as follows:

**H7:** Job stress mediates the relationship between psychosocial stress and job satisfaction.

Based on the hypothesis development, the empirical model that developed in this research as follows:



**Figure 1**  
Empirical Model

## RESEARCH METHODS

### Variable Operational Definition

#### Psychosocial Stress

It is the mental pressure a person feels, referring to the phenomenon of something occurring in the surrounding environment (Yang *et al.*, 2020). Psychosocial stress is measured using five indicators: difficulty concentrating, feeling tired and helpless/desperate, feeling sad for a long time, feeling afraid/worried about contracting the virus, and feeling disappointed in the environment, family, and friends. A 5-point Likert scale was used in this study (1= Strongly Disagree and 5= Strongly Agree).

#### Job Insecurity

Job insecurity is an employee's perception of the possibility of losing their job during a crisis. This variable is measured using five indicators developed by Aguiar-Quintana *et al.* (2021); Octafian & Nugraheni (2022); Vo-Thanh *et al.* (2021, 2022). Job insecurity is measured by five indicators, namely: worries about the future of work, worries about being fired at any time, worries about being laid off, concerns about careers not progressing, and worries about salary cuts or bonus waivers. A Likert scale with 5 points was used in this study (1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree).

#### Job Stress

In this study, job stress is employees' inability to cope with work pressure due to the employee's incompatibility with the demands expected by the company (Yang *et al.*, 2020). The indicators used are perceptions of job demands that are too high, feelings of work that are always precarious, difficulty in achieving targets, burdens of high job, and very depressed with his career. This study used a Likert scale with 5 points (1=Strongly Disagree and 5=Strongly Agree).

#### Job Satisfaction

It is a negative or positive evaluative assessment of a person towards his current job. The indicator of job satisfaction variable refers to the research of Alrawashdeh *et al.* (2021); Weiss (2002), such as satisfaction with the way the company handles the pandemic, satisfaction with company policies related to the pandemic, satisfaction with the benefits received during the pandemic. A Likert scale with 5 points was used in this study (1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree).

#### Data Collection Procedure

This study uses primary data, namely data taken directly from research subjects. The data was obtained using a questionnaire distributed to direct sales employees across Surabaya. The questionnaire used a closed type of questionnaire so that respondents did not need a long time to provide answers to the questionnaire.

The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part is a question regarding the respondent's characteristics, which consists of the respondent's identity,

such as age, education level, etc. The second part is the core statement related to the research variables. The statement in part 2 is then tested for validity and reliability to obtain correct and consistent question indicators. Each variable was measured using several reports with a total of 20 questions.

### Population and Sample

The population in this study were all direct sales employees in the city of Surabaya. The Surabaya area is divided into five regions: West Surabaya, North Surabaya, East Surabaya, Central Surabaya, and South Surabaya. The focus of distributing the questionnaires was in the East Surabaya area, specifically the SIER industrial area (Surabaya Industrial Estate Rungkut).

Questionnaires were distributed in collaboration with HRD in several companies and went directly to sales employees in several markets/sales centres. The distribution of questionnaires also applies a snowball sampling system where respondents will distribute questionnaires to others. The questionnaire will stop when it is deemed sufficient for data analysis. Data adequacy refers to (Hair *et al.*, 2014), where the sample is considered acceptable when the number of indicators is multiplied by five. The total indicators in this study are twenty, multiplied by five by one hundred. Thus, the sample distribution will be completed when a minimum of 100 respondents are obtained. Sample respondents in this study obtained as many as 237 respondents. This amount already matches the requirements for data processing and analysis.

### Data Analysis

Hair *et al.* (2014) suggested that variance-based SEM is an appropriate test when the research includes a constructive measurement model. This study uses Structural Equation Modelling based on variance with SmartPLS 3.0 software. The data processor uses variance-based SEM because of the construct with a formative measurement model. In addition, variance-based SEM is useful to analyze latent variables.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 below presents the results of the descriptive statistics as follows:

**Table 1**  
**Descriptive Statistics**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Psychosocial Stress	237	1.6	5	4.13	0.8
Job Insecurity	237	1.8	5	4.02	1.02
Job Stress	237	2	5	3.95	1
Job Satisfaction	237	1	5	3.71	1.21

The table above shows that the total number of samples processed in this study was 237, with the minimum answer value being number 1 on the job satisfaction variable and the maximum answer limit being 5 points for all variables. The average total answers ranged from 4 points, and only the job satisfaction variable had the smallest mean, 3.7. The Table above also shows that the overall standard deviation value is smaller than the mean value, which means that the entire data distribution is evenly distributed.

**Outer Model Analysis**

**Convergent Validity Test Result**

The result of testing the outer model in the first stage is the value of convergent validity. The value of convergent validity can be seen from the loading factor's value and the t count's importance. The loading factor value is said to be valid when it is more than 0.7.

**Table 2**  
**Outer Loading**

	<b>Job Stress</b>	<b>Job Satisfaction</b>	<b>Job Insecurity</b>	<b>Psychosocial Stress</b>
X1.1				0.846
X1.2				0.909
X1.3				0.917
X1.4				0.921
X1.5				0.888
Y1		0.940		
Y2		0.951		
Y3		0.952		
Y4		0.919		
Y5		0.927		
Z1.1			0.934	
Z1.2			0.930	
Z1.3			0.937	
Z1.4			0.902	
Z1.5			0.915	
Z2.1	0.852			
Z2.2	0.920			
Z2.3	0.902			
Z2.4	0.929			
Z2.5	0.884			

Table 2 above shows that the correlation value for each measurement item on all variables is around 0.852-0.952. All statement items in this study used to measure psychosocial stress, job insecurity, job stress, and job satisfaction were valid and could be used for further analysis.

## Cross Loading

The cross-loading value is used to measure discriminant validity. The construct validity of the latent variable is said to be good/qualified when it has a high cross-loading value (0.7).

**Table 3**  
Cross Loading Value

	Job Stress	Job Satisfaction	Job Insecurity	Psychosocial Stress
X1.1	0.550	-0.307	0.601	<b>0.846</b>
X1.2	0.656	-0.419	0.637	<b>0.909</b>
X1.3	0.618	-0.304	0.629	<b>0.917</b>
X1.4	0.601	-0.405	0.640	<b>0.921</b>
X1.5	0.601	-0.322	0.613	<b>0.888</b>
Y1	-0.474	<b>0.940</b>	-0.521	-0.395
Y2	-0.478	<b>0.951</b>	-0.494	-0.353
Y3	-0.501	<b>0.952</b>	-0.498	-0.401
Y4	-0.404	<b>0.919</b>	-0.410	-0.320
Y5	-0.489	<b>0.927</b>	-0.465	-0.371
Z1.1	0.746	-0.494	<b>0.934</b>	0.667
Z1.2	0.762	-0.509	<b>0.930</b>	0.681
Z1.3	0.750	-0.432	<b>0.937</b>	0.626
Z1.4	0.744	-0.440	<b>0.902</b>	0.573
Z1.5	0.711	-0.480	<b>0.915</b>	0.660
Z2.1	<b>0.852</b>	-0.372	0.747	0.602
Z2.2	<b>0.920</b>	-0.477	0.731	0.655
Z2.3	<b>0.902</b>	-0.500	0.688	0.559
Z2.4	<b>0.929</b>	-0.439	0.742	0.675
Z2.5	<b>0.884</b>	-0.465	0.702	0.534

Table 3 shows that all cross-loading values are more than 0.7, which means that the contract's validity from this study is said to be good. The data has met the discriminant validity requirements.

## Construct Reliability and Validity Test

This reliability test determines the reliability or consistency of variable measurement. In this test, the researcher uses Cronbach's alpha technique. According to Malhotra & Mukherjee (2013), the research questionnaire is reliable if it can produce a Cronbach's alpha value greater than 0.60.

**Table 4**  
**Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted**

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Job Stress	0.940	0.954	0.806
Job Satisfaction	0.966	0.973	0.880
Job Insecurity	0.957	0.967	0.853
Psychosocial Stress	0.939	0.953	0.804

The results shown in Table 4 show that the overall value generated has met the requirements of construct validity and reliability because it has a Cronbach's alpha value greater than 0.60, an AVE value of more than 0.5, and a composite reliability value of more than 0.7 constructs.

**Inner Model Analysis**

**Value of R Squared (R<sup>2</sup>)**

Output another testing of the model is done by looking at the value of R<sup>2</sup>, which is the goodness fit test of the model in the PLS-SEM inner model. The value of R squared is the coefficient of determination on the endogenous construct. While the Adjusted R squared is the R squared value that has been corrected based on the standard error value. Adjusted R squared value provides a stronger picture than R squared in assessing the ability of an exogenous construct to explain endogenous constructs. Chin (1998); Ghazali (2014) states that the R squared value of 0.67 is included in the strong category, 0.33 is included in the moderate category, and the value of 0.19 is included in the weak category.

**Table 5**  
**Value of R Squared**

	R Squared	Adjusted R Squared
Job Stress	0.457	0.455
Job Satisfaction	0.285	0.276
Job Insecurity	0.485	0.483

Table 5 above shows that the R Square in this study is included in the moderate category; 0.4 for job stress, 0.28 for job satisfaction, and 0.48 for job insecurity.

**Direct Effect Results**

The next testing stage is to examine the relationship between variables on the direct effect path, in other words, to examine the relationship parameters between variables representing each theoretical hypothesis. The hypothesis can be accepted when the path parameter is statistically significant with the direction of influence as predicted, meaning that the path parameter must be greater than zero for the positive direction and less than zero for the negative direction (Hair *et al.*, 2014).

In the test of the relationship between variables, hypothesis testing is carried



out to test the significance of the effect between variables, using the critical ratio value and the probability value (p-value). Variables are said to significantly affect other variables when the critical ratio (CR)  $\geq 1.96$  or the p-value significance level of 5% or 0.05. Table 6 below is the result of testing the direct influence between variables:

**Table 6**  
**Direct Effect Results**

	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
Psychosocial Stress → Job Insecurity	0.696	14.769	0.000
Psychosocial Stress → Job Satisfaction	-0.016	0.297	0.767
Psychosocial Stress → Job Stress	0.676	15.580	0.000
Job Insecurity → Job Satisfaction	-0.298	3.359	0.001
Job Stress → Job Satisfaction	-0.252	2.753	0.006

Based on Table 6 above, it can be explained as follows: The estimation results of the psychosocial stress variable parameter on job insecurity show a significant effect, indicated by p-values of 0.000 (less than 5%). The original sample value is 0.696 (positive), meaning that the more employees feel psychosocial pressure, the more they will increase their perception of job insecurity. Thus, hypothesis 1 (H1) can be accepted.

Testing the psychosocial stress variable on job satisfaction shows no influence between variables. It is indicated by the p-values of 0.767 (greater than 5%). Thus, employees agree to feel the psychosocial pressure of the impact of the pandemic, but this does not affect their level of satisfaction with their work; in other words, whether employees are satisfied with their work is not influenced by their psychosocial pressure conditions, especially due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this case, hypothesis 2 (H2) cannot be accepted.

The parameter estimation of the psychosocial stress variable on job stress shows a significant effect, indicated by p-values of 0.000 (less than 5%). The original sample value is 0.676 (positive), meaning that the more employees feel psychosocial pressure, it will also increase the employee's work pressure on their work. Thus, hypothesis 3 (H3) can be accepted. Likewise, testing on the job insecurity variable on job satisfaction shows a significant effect with p-values of 0.001 (smaller than 5%). The original sample value is -0.298 (negative), meaning that the more employees feel insecure or feel insecure about the future of their work, they will ultimately reduce the level of employee satisfaction with their work. Thus, hypothesis 4 (H4) can be accepted.

Furthermore, the results of testing the job stress variable on job satisfaction show a significant negative effect, meaning that the higher the job stress the employee feels, the lower the level of job satisfaction. Thus, hypothesis 5 (H5) can be accepted.

### Indirect Effect Results

Table 7 below shows the results of the indirect effect in this study:

**Table 7**  
**Indirect Effect Test**

	<b>Original Sample (O)</b>	<b>T Statistics ( O /STDEV)</b>	<b>P Values</b>
Psychosocial Stress → Job Insecurity → Job Satisfaction	-0.207	3.382	0.001
Psychosocial Stress → Job Stress → Job Satisfaction	-0.170	2.757	0.006

Table 7 above shows the P Values of the mediating relationship of job insecurity on psychosocial stress to job satisfaction is 0.001 (less than 5%). It means psychosocial stress affects job satisfaction through job insecurity mediation. The nature of the mediator is known to be fully mediation because it can be seen in Table 6 that there is no direct influence between psychosocial stress on job satisfaction. Still, when the job insecurity variable appears as a mediating variable, all three are proven to have an influence.

The significance test results of the indirect effect between psychosocial stress, job stress, and job satisfaction showed a p-value of 0.006 (less than 5%). It means psychosocial stress affects job satisfaction through job stress mediation. The nature of the mediator is known to be fully mediation because it can be seen in Table 6 that there is no influence between psychosocial stress on job satisfaction. However, when the job stress variable appears as a mediating variable, all three are proven to have an influence.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Psychosocial stress has a significant positive effect on job insecurity**

In this study, the results showed that the psychosocial stress variable had a significant positive effect on job insecurity. The sample in this study is sales employees who sell directly to customers who feel the impact of psychosocial pressure from COVID-19. This also increases their anxiety about the future of their work. In other words, employees agree that they feel insecure about their work's future and the psychosocial pressures they feel due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This finding supports previous research by Giménez-Espert *et al.* (2020) where feelings of job insecurity increase when the surrounding conditions are stressful and bring negative emotions. This condition is evidenced by the answers of employees who agree that they feel there is a psychosocial impact of COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic limits the distance and intensity of community gatherings, and employees feel less free to sell their products. They were coupled with the sluggish purchasing power of the people who made their sales targets not achieved. This condition ultimately makes employees resign in the event of dismissal at any time.

### **Psychosocial stress does not affect job satisfaction**

Table 6 shows that the P Values of direct testing of psychosocial stress on job satisfaction are 0.767, which means that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic psychosocial pressure does not affect job satisfaction. This result certainly does not support previous research by Karlsson *et al.*, 2020; Kim *et al.*, (2010), who explained that employees who work in an unsafe environment feel depressed, and unhappy tend to reduce their job satisfaction. However, these findings support the research of Jamal *et al.* (2021) that employees can still generate productivity and maintain job satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic. Of course, this is balanced by the existence of work schedule autonomy, work flexibility, and adequate technological resources.

From the five indicators related to job satisfaction, most employees agreed (on a scale of 5) on the first indicator about 'satisfied with the way the company has responded to COVID-19. It shows that employees are quite satisfied with how the company handles the pandemic. Characteristics of respondents show that majority of them are between 26-35 years old. Their work enthusiasm and productivity are still high. Furthermore, most employees' work status in this study is still on a contract. Therefore, they feel grateful that they still work and are paid even though they feel the psychosocial pressure of the pandemic. Then, most companies in the SIER industrial area are Multi-National Companies (MNCs) with strong financial scales and good human resource management. So, handling related to the impact of the pandemic is also good.

### **Psychosocial stress has a significant positive effect on job stress**

The findings of this study support previous research by Yang *et al.* (2020) which explained the mechanism of psychosocial stress that can directly affect work. In this study, it was proven by the number of agreeable answers (scale 5) on the job stress answer indicator, which stated, feel pressured because the job has a high chance of being exposed to the virus. Employees in this study were afraid because the actual pandemic had not ended. Employees were worried that they would be infected or infect the surrounding community.

The critical societal situation is an important stressor that can form a psychosocial stress condition. Psychosocial stress felt by employees ultimately affects employees' emotions at work. Employees feel pressured/stressed and become less professional in completing their responsibilities. Employees' negative emotions are formed when there is limited space for movement, fear, anxiety, changes in lifestyle, and feelings of suspicion.

### **Job Insecurity has a significant negative effect on job satisfaction**

It can be seen from Table 6 that the results of the direct influence test between the job insecurity variables on job satisfaction show that there is a significant negative relationship between the two. That is, respondents in this study agree that the more they feel insecure about the future of their work, the more it affects their satisfaction

with the work they do. The pandemic conditions make it difficult for employees to achieve sales targets, so they feel threatened that they could be fired at any time or feel insecure because their health and safety are also threatened. This perception lowers the level of employee satisfaction with the work done. In the end, job dissatisfaction with sales targets cannot be achieved.

This finding supports previous research by Nemteanu *et al.* (2021); Wilson *et al.* (2020) which have been proven empirically. Employees feel hopeless about their future job. Thus, they feel dissatisfied with their work. Employees tend to work unhappy because they think the current work they are doing will not continue in the future.

### **Job stress has a significant negative effect on job satisfaction**

The results of this study support several studies related to mental health by Burke *et al.* (2005); Fiksdal *et al.* (2019); Jefferies (1991). When stress hormones build up in the body, it could cause mood swings (mood and several other health problems). Respondents agree that when they feel pressured by their workload, it makes employees dissatisfied with the work they are currently doing. In the end, employees who work with feelings of pressure make them less professional at work, which decreases employee job satisfaction (Antoniou *et al.*, 2003).

The majority of products sold by respondents in this study are fast-moving consumer goods, which are people's daily consumption. Employees sell by visiting markets, shops, and supermarkets by going around to meet customers directly. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the movement of employees to meet customers is very limited. Employees also have to follow the company's strict rules every day, such as rules on health protocols and changes in the way of working using digitalization systems. On the other hand, sales targets must be achieved to continue to run the company's operations. Employees agree that this condition increases their perception of perceived job stress. Finally, the employees are not satisfied with the work they are currently doing.

### **Job insecurity has a mediating effect on the relationship between psychosocial stress and job satisfaction**

The results of the direct effect test in Table 6 show that the psychosocial stress variable of the impact of COVID-19 does not affect employee job satisfaction. However, when the indirect effect test was carried out by adding the variable job insecurity, it showed that there was an indirect effect of job insecurity on the relationship between psychosocial stress and job satisfaction. So, the job insecurity variable in this study is fully mediated. These results support previous research by Giménez-Espert *et al.* (2020); Octafian & Nugraheni (2022); Wilson *et al.* (2020) who proved that a person's perception of future job insecurity could lowering their job satisfaction.

Respondents agree with their perceptions of the psychosocial impact of

COVID-19, but it did not directly affect their job satisfaction. When this study included the variable job insecurity in the indirect test, it turned out that the results obtained were different. Employees' perceptions of future job insecurity indirectly affect their job satisfaction. When employees feel that there is no future in their jobs, they agree that the psychosocial impact of COVID is affecting their job satisfaction.

These results can be supported by the age of most respondents, who range from 26-35 years which, according to WHO, is a productive working age. Respondents are still enthusiastic about working even though there is a fear of contracting or transmitting the COVID-19 virus. However, when there is a perception that there is no future in their work, employees begin to feel dissatisfied with their work.

### **Job stress has a mediating effect on the relationship between psychosocial stress and job satisfaction**

Previous studies describe how job stress can affect employee job satisfaction (Antoniou *et al.*, 2003; Chitra, 2021; Said & El-Shafei, 2021). However, the direct test results of psychosocial stress variables on job satisfaction show that there is no influence between these variables. It means that job satisfaction of employee is not influenced by the psychosocial impact of COVID-19. Characteristics of respondents tend to accept changes in the social environment and the changing work environment in these uncertain times. Employees agree that they also feel the psychosocial impact due to COVID-19. They also fear being infected or transmitting the virus, but it does not affect how satisfied or unsatisfied with the work they are doing.

Furthermore, the results of indirect testing using the job stress variable proves an indirect effect of psychosocial stress on job satisfaction. This mediation test is a full mediation. The psychosocial stress of the impact of COVID-19 that employees feel directly does not affect the employee's job satisfaction. When work pressure arises, employees' stress of target felt by them ultimately affects their job satisfaction. The work pressure employees feel during the pandemic, such as sales targets and the fear of being exposed to the virus with a high workload, are factors that cannot be ignored. This condition ultimately reduces satisfaction with the work that they do.

## **CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

Based on the analysis and discussion results, 6 (six) research results follow the hypothesis, and 1 (one) research result rejects the hypothesis. The following are the conclusions from the analysis and discussion of the research carried out: psychosocial stress due to COVID-19 affects increasing employee perceptions of job insecurity. Psychosocial stress due to COVID-19 has not affected employee job satisfaction. Psychosocial stress due to COVID-19 has a significant positive effect on job stress. Job insecurity felt by employees during the pandemic is proven to reduce their job satisfaction at work. Job stress felt by employees also reduces their job satisfaction at

work. Employee job satisfaction is also indirectly influenced by job stress and employee job insecurity.

The characteristics of employees in this study tend to accept all conditions and company policies, and employees are grateful to be able to work during this pandemic. When employees have their working time authority, the application of appropriate technology, and the existence of good work policies during the pandemic, it does not affect their job satisfaction in doing their jobs. Employees will understand the current business situation.

Respondents accept the consequences of the pandemic. However, when there is a workload and insecurity in their work, it affects their satisfaction at work. The employees in this study felt the psychosocial impact of COVID-19, but it did not affect their satisfaction at work. For companies, they could be able to create a work environment following pandemic conditions, especially regarding the safety and security of employees both physically and mentally. For instance, adjusting sales targets to pandemic conditions, using a digitalization approach to reduce employee interactions with consumers, and creating the perception that their work will remain safe in the future. A reduction in wages and efficiency of incentives will be more acceptable to employees than working with the perception that they will be fired at any time.

The psychosocial stress due to COVID-19 itself cannot be avoided. Fear of something that continues to overshadow the safety and trauma of being a COVID-19 survivor or trauma due to losing a family member due to COVID-19 is also unavoidable. The government can make maximum efforts, including dealing with mental illness due to the psychosocial impact of COVID-19. Mental health check-up clinics/psychological clinics that are friendly to the people are provided so they can embrace those experiencing psychic decline due to COVID-19. A safe image is also needed by the community in reducing the psychosocial impact of COVID-19, such as tackling exaggerated hoax news due to COVID, information related to corruption of medical devices, collusion in hospital care, as well as continuing to convince the public that the new era is safe and healthy. It will be realized if we comply with health protocols.

Along with its strengths, this study has a number of limitations. Data collection was carried out during a pandemic using the snowball technique. Therefore, some data may be biased or invalid because the researchers needed to meet the respondents directly. Communication and data are also performed via email. This study only focuses on sales employees in one industrial area in Surabaya. The results may be different when using a wider population, with varying types of work, and then comparing with several cities in Indonesia. Characteristics of other respondents will eventually lead to various patterns in the results obtained. There are different individual stress management variables. Thus, further research can add other related

variables. In doing so, they can contribute to a wider theory and discussion from this research.

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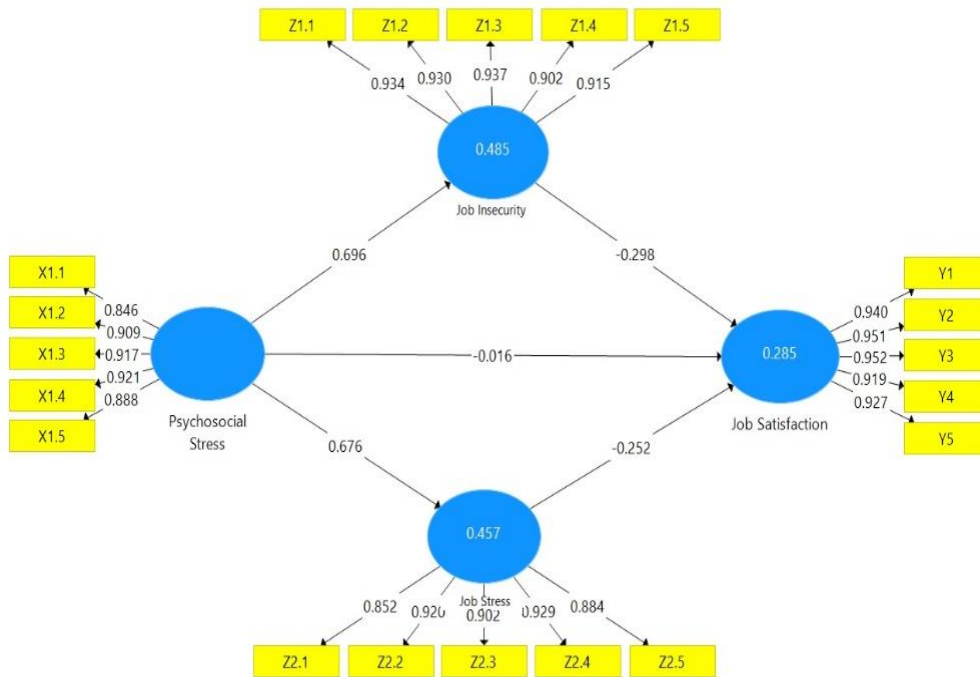
**APPENDIX**

**Table 8**  
**Characteristics of Respondents**

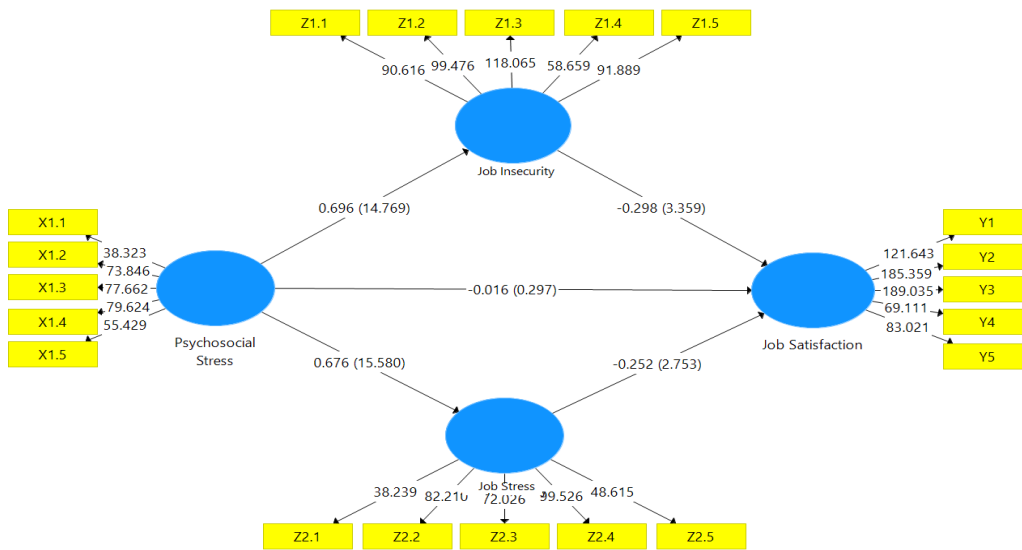
Characteristics	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Age	17 – 25 years old	86	36.3
	26 – 35 years old	142	59.9
	36 – 45 years old	9	3.8
Gender	Male	95	40.1
	Female	142	59.9
Experience	Less than 1 year	32	13.5
	1 – 2 years	45	19.0
	More than 2 – 4 years	94	39.7
	More than 4 years	66	27.8
Product Type	Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG)	192	81.0
		45	19.0
	Others		
Employment Status	Permanent	60	25.3
	Contract	177	74.7

**Table 9**  
**Descriptive Statistics of Research Indicators**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
X1.1	237	1	5	4.15	.938
X1.2	237	1	5	4.05	1.067
X1.3	237	1	5	4.14	.990
X1.4	237	1	5	4.11	1.027
X1.5	237	2	5	4.24	.956
Z1.1	237	2	5	3.97	1.160
Z1.2	237	1	5	4.06	1.122
Z1.3	237	1	5	4.06	1.111
Z1.4	237	2	5	4.05	1.044
Z1.5	237	2	5	3.99	1.095
Z2.1	237	2	5	3.91	1.080
Z2.2	237	2	5	3.83	1.139
Z2.3	237	1	5	3.99	1.116
Z2.4	237	2	5	3.95	1.189
Z2.5	237	2	5	4.10	1.083
Y1	237	1	5	3.81	1.309
Y2	237	1	5	3.75	1.249
Y3	237	1	5	3.75	1.312
Y4	237	1	5	3.66	1.216
Y5	237	1	5	3.62	1.375
Valid N (listwise)	237				



**Figure 2**  
**Diagram of Measurement Outer Model Result**  
 Source: Data processed using SmartPLS (2022)



**Figure 3**  
**Diagram of Measurement Inner Model Result**  
 Source: Data processed using SmartPLS (2022)

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