

Study on Perceptions of Stigmatisation and Discrimination of Persons with Mental Illness in the Workplace

Study Brief

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Acknowledging the immense and multi-faceted challenges in addressing mental health problems in the *2017 Mental Health Review Report*, the Government pledged to adopt an integrated and multi-disciplinary approach towards mental health, including promotion, prevention, early identification, as well as timely intervention and treatment, and rehabilitation for persons in need. Over the past few years, as well as setting up an Advisory Committee on Mental Health, the Government has continued its efforts to provide comprehensive services to persons with mental health needs and to increase public awareness and understanding of mental health. The latter preventive measure aims at promoting healthy lifestyle and mental well-being, encouraging people in need to seek help in a timely manner, and reducing stigma.

2. Given that Hong Kong is a high-tempo, action-packed, and densely populated city, it is not uncommon for its residents to suffer from different types of mental health problems. For example, according to the Hong Kong Mental Morbidity Survey 2010-2013, 13.3% of Chinese respondents aged between 16 and 75 reported common mental disorders (including mixed anxiety and depressive disorder, generalised anxiety disorder, depressive episode, panic disorders, all phobias and obsessive compulsive disorder, etc.). In 2014, 4.8% of those aged 18-64 were classified as having severe non-specific psychological distress. The demand for psychiatric services of the Hospital Authority also increased, with the number of patients with mental illness under its care rising from about 187,000 in 2011-12 to over 220,000 in 2015-16.

3. A territory-wide survey in 2015 also revealed that two-fifth of the 2,015 respondents (aged 12-75) rated their mental health status as fair (36.2%) or very poor/ poor (4.6%) over the six months before the survey in late 2015. In addition, using the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K6), out of all respondents, 5.5% experienced a high level of psychological distress during the past 30 days (with K6 score ≥ 13). 9.6% of the respondents reported having consulted professionals due to their mental health problems. Overall, 4.6% sought consultation due to anxiety, and another 4.3% for depression and mood disorders. Regarding knowledge about mental health, while over 70% of the respondents were able to recognise major and clear symptoms of common mental problems, only 38-58% could identify subtle symptoms.

4. Another representative telephone survey conducted in mid-2018 showed that, compared with their non-employed counterparts, the mental well-being of respondents in employment was significantly worse. The mean score of WHO-5 of the employee respondents was 48.80 (any score under 52 is regarded as having poor mental health), lower than that of both their employers (49.44) and self-employed persons (51.19). Out of 560 employed respondents, 31.0% expressed that their jobs posed adverse effects on their mental health.

5. Under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO), the Equal Opportunities Commission received over 300 complaints in relation to psychiatric disability or mental illness between 2014 and 2018 (Table 1). Among these, 71.6% were related to employment. Indeed, questions about sick leave are constantly brought up in our training workshops and seminars. A recent court case further demonstrated that it is not uncommon for persons with mental health issues to be harassed when applying for sick leave and requesting alternative work arrangements to accommodate their mental health needs.

Table 1: Number of Complaints Received under Disability Discrimination Ordinance over the Past Five Years

Year	Complaints received under DDO			
	Total	In relation to psychiatric disability/ mental illness		
		Total	Employment	Non-employment
2014	336	73	51	22
2015	278	49	35	14
2016	203	40	32	8
2017	267	58	42	16
2018	570	83	57	26

INVITATION TO SUBMIT PROPOSALS

6. Given the relatively poor mental well-being of the employed population, this EOC-commissioned study aims at examining experiences of discrimination among employed persons with mental illness and understanding the impact of discrimination, harassment, and stigmatisation on this group. In addition, through gauging the views of other stakeholders (including employers and supervisors), evidence-based recommendations could be formulated not only to enhance public awareness of mental health, but also to provide equal opportunities to persons with mental illness and to protect them from discrimination in employment and accessing healthcare services.

Specific Objectives

7. Specific objectives of the study are as follows:
- (a) To evaluate the awareness and understanding of mental health among employers, supervisors, and employees in Hong Kong;

- (b) To study the prevalence of discrimination against persons with mental illness in the workplace;
- (c) To discover the patterns and practices of discrimination against persons with mental illness in the process of job application and in the workplace;
- (d) To examine the factors associated with the vulnerability to workplace discrimination among persons with mental illness;
- (e) To assess the take-up of sick leave among persons with mental illness: (i) how difficult it is to take such leave and (ii) how employers and supervisors look upon such leave;
- (f) To understand the immediate responses of and actions taken by persons with mental illness when encountering discrimination, and the reasons behind;
- (g) To identify the impact of stigmatisation and discrimination on persons with mental illness in terms of their employment, treatment/ recovery trajectories, and help-seeking patterns; and
- (h) To solicit views from stakeholders in facilitating the employment and the treatment/ recovery of persons with mental illness and in redressing stigmatisation and discrimination against persons with mental illness in the workplace.

8. Research teams are welcome to cover other specific issues which would facilitate the research exercise. Such suggestions and the related research design should be included in the research proposal and will be counted towards the teams' score in the assessment exercise.

Duration of the Study

9. It is expected that the project will be commenced before the end of September 2019 and completed within a timeframe of 12 months.

Budget of the Study

10. The upper limit budgeted for the research project is capped at HK\$600,000. The amount of fee paid to the commissioned research team will be published in the EOC's website after the completion of the research study.

Briefing Session for Interested Research Teams

11. A briefing session will be held to give an introduction of the current invitation. Research teams who are interested in submitting proposals are welcome. Details and registration method of the briefing session can be found in the EOC's website.

Research Proposal

12. Research teams who are interested in taking up the research project are required to submit a Technical Proposal and a Fee Proposal.

13. The Technical Proposal should include, but not limited to, the following:

- (a) An overview of the research team's perception and understanding of the subject matter of the study;
- (b) A detailed illustration of the approach employed in conducting the study and the analytical framework adopted in achieving the objectives of the study specified above;

- (c) An in-depth discussion of the research design and methods of data collection;
- (d) A description of the pilot survey conducted to verify testing instruments and procedures, the research ethics practices, and the quality control measures used in both fieldwork and office editing;
- (e) A presentation of data processing and data analysis plans;
- (f) A proposed work schedule of the entire study according to the duration specified above;
- (g) A description of the research teams, including the qualifications and experiences of the principal investigator and other key research personnel; and
- (h) Any other information that might assist in the evaluation of the proposal.

14. The Fee Proposal should include a budget plan with breakdown of costs for the research study and the method of payment.

Other Conditions

15. In addition, the research team (including members of the research team and, if any, all interviewers and facilitators) is required to fulfill the following conditions:

- (a) To discuss regularly with EOC staff in designing survey instruments, if applicable, which should be approved by the EOC;
- (b) To provide detailed plans of data analyses; and

- (c) To have basic knowledge of equal opportunity issues and to conduct the study in a sensitive manner when dealing with equal opportunity issues.

Copyright

16. Copyright of the research report, data collected and information derived from the study shall remain the property of the EOC. Subject to the prior approval of the EOC, the research team might be allowed to use the data and information for the purposes of academic research and academic publication.

Presentation of the Results of the Study

17. The research team should present the results of the study according to the following:

- (a) A bilingual (English and Chinese) full report of the study, including if necessary a glossary of definition of terms and technical jargons, should be produced. The format of the report should be agreed by the EOC. As well as an executive summary, the full report should include the following as its contents: research objectives, methodology, findings, discussions, recommendations, and implications.
- (b) Info graphics in bilingual format should be produced to present the research findings.
- (c) A validated and clean data file in a mutually agreed electronic format should be submitted to the EOC.
- (d) Oral presentations of the research results to the EOC and to the public at a media briefing should be made.

- (e) Research progress is subject to monitoring by the EOC. It is imperative to submit progress reports and present results orally as means of evaluation.

Selection Criteria

18. The EOC will consider both the cost and quality of the research proposals concurrently in reviewing the proposals. Selection criteria can be found in the EOC's website.

SUBMISSION OF PROPOSAL

19. Submission in Two Envelopes

- (a) The **Technical Proposal** and the **Fee Proposal** should be submitted in two separate, sealed envelopes.
- (b) **Technical Proposal Envelope:** One original and three duplicate copies of the Technical Proposal in bilingual (English and Chinese) format should be prepared and submitted in a separate, sealed envelope.
- (c) **Fee Proposal Envelope:** (i) One original and three duplicate copies of the Fee Proposal in bilingual (English and Chinese) format and (ii) one original copy of completed and signed form of "Warranty for Anti-Collusion" (Annex 1) in bilingual (English and Chinese) format should be prepared and submitted in a separate, sealed envelope.
- (d) The two sealed envelopes containing the Technical Proposal and the Fee Proposal (with the completed and signed form of "Warranty") should be put in one sealed envelope and placed in the HVQT Box at the reception counter of the EOC Office (address as shown below) **before 5:00p.m. on 3 July 2019**

(Wednesday). The envelope must be marked with the title of the research project but should not bear any indication which may relate the submission to the research team.

**Equal Opportunities Commission
16/F., 41 Heung Yip Road,
Wong Chuk Hang,
Hong Kong**

20. Research team that has submitted a proposal will be contacted for the electronic version of the Technical Proposal and the Fee Proposal.

21. Research team that has submitted a proposal may be required to give an oral presentation to Members of the EOC.

*Equal Opportunities Commission
April 2019*

To: Equal Opportunities Commission

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Warranty for Anti-Collusion

- (1) By submitting a tender, the Research Team represents and warrants that in relation to the invitation to tender of “Study on Perceptions of Stigmatisation and Discrimination of Persons with Mental Illness in the Workplace”:
 - (a) it has not communicated and will not communicate to any person other than the Equal Opportunities Commission the amount of any tender price;
 - (b) it has not fixed and will not fix the amount of any tender price by arrangement with any person;
 - (c) it has not made and will not make any arrangement with any person as to whether it or that other person will or will not submit a tender; and
 - (d) it has not otherwise colluded and will not otherwise collude with any person in any manner whatsoever in the tendering process.

- (2) In the event that the Research Team is in breach of any of representations and/or warranties in Clause (1) above, the Equal Opportunities Commission shall be entitled to, without compensation to any person or liability on the part of the Equal Opportunities Commission:
 - (a) reject the tender;
 - (b) if the Equal Opportunities Commission has accepted the tender, withdraw its acceptance of the tender; and
 - (c) if the Equal Opportunities Commission has entered into contract with the Research Team, terminate the contract.

- (3) The Research Team shall indemnify and keep indemnified the Equal Opportunities Commission against all losses, damage, costs or expenses arising out of or in relation to any breach of any of the representations and/ or warranties in Clause (1) above.

- (4) A breach by a Research Team of any of the representations and/ or warranties in Clause (1) may prejudice its future standing as the Equal Opportunities Commission’s supplier or service provider.

Annex 1

- (5) Clause (1) shall have no application to the Research Team's communications in strict confidence with its own insurers or brokers to obtain insurance quotation for computation of the tender price, or with its professional advisers, and consultants or sub-contractors to solicit their assistance in preparation of tender submission.

- (6) The rights of the Equal Opportunities Commission under Clauses (2) to (4) above are in addition to and without prejudice to any other rights or remedies available to it against the Research Team.

Signature of the
Authorized Person
Representing the Research Team: _____
Team:

Name of the Authorized
Person (in Block Letters): _____

Organization Chop: _____

Date: _____