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Prevalence and influence of lower back pain on work performance of civil service workers in Botswana

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Abstract:

Background: Lower back pain (LBP) is a common and costly health condition recognized as one of the conditions that can cause discomfort and loss of work hours for sufferers. Few epidemiological studies have investigated the prevalence and the risk factors of lower back pain among civil service workers, particularly in Africa. The study aimed to establish the prevalence and influence of LBP on the work performance of civil service workers in Botswana.

Methodology: A concurrent mixed-methods approach was used. A retrospective medical record review was conducted on medical records of civil service workers, and descriptive statistics were performed using the statistical package for social services (SPSS) version 22. Semi-structured interviews were conducted among civil service workers and were analyzed using thematic content analysis.

Results: Three hundred thirty-nine (339) medical records of civil service workers were reviewed. The majority of the participants were female n = 234 (69%) and males n = 105 (31%). The prevalence of LBP in this study was found to be 48.7%. There was no association between demographic profiles, age, gender, marital status, and comorbidities with lower back pain because their p-values were above 0.05.

The themes that emerged were: the character of pain, managing LBP, pain affects life domains namely, social life, sleep, mental health, functioning, finances, and work life and performance.

Conclusions: Lower back pain is prevalent among civil service workers and as a result, they are limited in certain activities of everyday life. There is a need for workplace wellness programs to focus more on preventing lower back pain among civil service workers.

Keywords: Lower back pain, civil service workers, risk factors of LBP, work performance.