

The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Patient Safety Culture in Taiwan

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Background

Patient safety culture (PSC) is one of the crucial commitments of healthcare organizations to create a safe care environment.^[1] Its sustainability has been the main focus during the novel infectious disease, the COVID-19 virus, outbreak. The year 2020 was the initial year of the COVID-19 pandemic around the world. However, owing to a prompt response from the central government, Taiwan did not experience a severe local outbreak until 2022. Thus, this study aimed to explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on patient safety culture in Taiwanese hospitals from 2018 to 2023, covering the world and local pandemic time durations.

Methods

A retrospective, longitudinal study design was adopted to find the changes in PSC dimensions in Taiwanese hospitals. The Joint Commission of Taiwan adopted a 30-item Safety Attitude Questionnaire (SAQ), developed by Dr. Sexton, to measure the safety culture in Taiwan.^[2] The study inclusion criteria for the hospitals was their continuous participation in the SAQ survey throughout the whole study duration from 2018 to 2023.

Results

In total, sixty-four hospitals (n=64) participated every year in the SAQ survey. In comparison to 2018, during the worldwide pandemic in 2020, SAQ observed a decrease in stress recognition ($\beta = -4.36$, $p < 0.001$) and management perception ($\beta = -3.85$, $p < 0.005$) dimensions along with a significant drop in working conditions ($\beta = -24.16$, $p < 0.001$) dimension. In 2022, during the major local outbreak, there were discrepancies in teamwork ($\beta =$

-2.92 , $p < 0.001$), safety climate ($\beta = -6.02$, $p < 0.001$), and job satisfaction ($\beta = -4.47$, $p < 0.001$) dimensions. Moreover, during this local outbreak period, dimensions such as stress recognition ($\beta = -2.83$, $p < 0.001$) and working conditions ($\beta = -3.70$, $p < 0.01$) showed a lower score compared to the pre-pandemic year of 2018. The results demonstrate that the COVID-19 pandemic affected not only during outbreak timeframes but also had substantial influences on the safety culture of the hospitals (Fig. 1).

Conclusion

The Taiwan patient safety culture measurement was found to be a reliable tool for examining the worldwide and local COVID-19 pandemic impacts on safety culture in healthcare organizations. The SAQ survey is a useful tool for healthcare organizations to monitor their safety culture climates for taking respective measures to improve and maintain a positive and safe care environment.

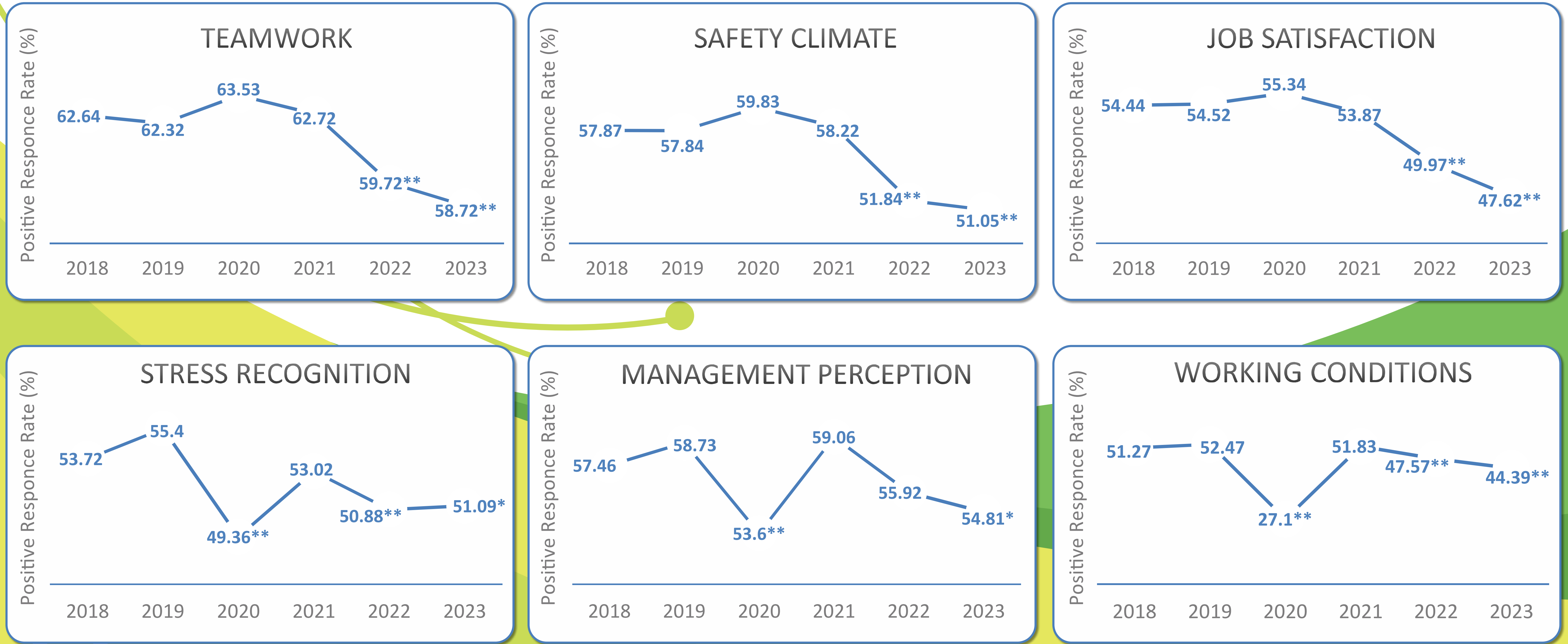
Keywords

patient safety culture, COVID-19, Taiwan

References

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Fig 1. Differences in Patient Safety Culture Dimensions



Note: p-value is derived from the GEE test; the year 2018 is set as reference *p < 0.05. ** p < 0.01