

Legal Responsibility of Doctors in Determining Working Capacity Based on the Results of Worker Health Examinations

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Abstract: One important part of occupational safety and health protection efforts is health examinations for workers. In this process, doctors play a central role in determining whether a worker is medically fit to perform their job duties. This decision on fitness for work is not only medical in nature, but also has significant legal implications for workers, employers, and doctors themselves. This study aims to examine the legal responsibilities of doctors in determining work fitness based on the results of medical examinations, as well as to explore the limitations and professional obligations of doctors in the context of employment. The research method used is normative juridical with a regulatory and literature study approach. The results of the study show that doctors are required to prioritize the principles of prudence, professionalism, and objectivity in providing medical assessments of work fitness. Errors or negligence in providing recommendations can lead to legal liability, whether civil, criminal, or medical ethics. Therefore, it is important for doctors to understand the legal basis, professional standards, and medical ethics in carrying out occupational health examinations.

Keywords: Doctors; Health Examinations; Legal Responsibility; Workers; Work Eligibility.

1. Introduction

Health examinations are mandatory for company owners to conduct on their employees. This is done to avoid problems caused by the employee's medical history or physical and mental disorders that are unknown to the company owner (Nordling et al., 2020). Health examinations are usually conducted before work, periodic examinations are conducted at certain times, and special examinations are conducted when problems arise due to workloads or the work environment. Health examinations for workers are stipulated in Law No. 01 of 1970 concerning Occupational Safety and in Regulation of the Minister of Manpower and Transmigration No. 02 of 1980 concerning Health Examinations. Based on Article 99 of Law No. 17 of 2023 concerning Health, health services are also considered one of the requirements for increasing employee productivity. Adequate occupational safety and health (K3) is also a fundamental right of every worker (Wang et al., 2023). Employers are prohibited from terminating the employment of workers/laborers on the grounds of being unable to work due to illness according to a doctor's statement for a period not exceeding 12 (twelve) consecutive months (Jarvis, 2023).

The rapid development of industrialization and the increasing complexity of employment relationships in the modern era have placed occupational health at the center of attention in both legal and medical discourse (Vuong, 2020). One of the crucial elements in this field is the health examination of workers, which serves as an initial gate to determine whether an individual is physically and mentally capable of carrying out certain types of work. The outcomes of such examinations do not only have implications for the health and safety of the worker but also for the productivity, efficiency, and legal compliance of the company. At the heart of this process lies the doctor, who is granted the authority and responsibility to examine, assess, and determine the working capacity of workers. The role of the doctor in this context is not merely a medical act but also a legal one, as the decision carries binding consequences for employers, employees, and even regulatory authorities (Lin et al., 2021).

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The objectives of occupational health services are in line with the objectives of occupational safety and health, namely to create a healthy, safe, and productive workforce. These objectives can be achieved because there is a very strong correlation between health and productivity (Seaver et al., 2022). This is based on the fact that the costs of occupational accidents and illnesses, as well as general illnesses, are increasing in type and prevalence due to poor conditions. This is because work or the work environment is very expensive compared to the costs of prevention efforts. Expensive curative costs include treatment, hospital care, and rehabilitation. According to Muhammad Abdul Kadir, "An agreement is an understanding whereby two or more people bind themselves to carry out something in the field of property." The working relationship between doctors and companies is also an agreement, because the two parties agree to enter into a contract that is more specific in nature because it is intended to be a written agreement or understanding (Susetiyono & Iftitah, 2021).

The object of this research is the legal responsibility of doctors in determining working capacity based on the results of worker health examinations. This topic is of paramount importance considering the significant consequences that arise from errors, negligence, or abuse of authority in the issuance of medical decisions related to occupational health. A doctor's determination that a worker is fit or unfit to work may determine whether the worker is accepted, retained, or dismissed, and may also influence compensation, insurance claims, and workplace safety measures. Thus, the accuracy, accountability, and legal foundation of such decisions are central to upholding justice and protecting the rights of all parties involved (Matippanna, 2022).

From a broader perspective, occupational health examinations are embedded within the framework of labor law, health law, and civil liability. In many jurisdictions, doctors performing such examinations are bound not only by professional codes of ethics but also by statutory obligations that regulate medical practice and labor relations. In Indonesia, for example, the implementation of health examinations is regulated under various laws and ministerial regulations, such as the Law on Manpower and regulations issued by the Ministry of Manpower and the Ministry of Health (Suparman, 2020). These regulations mandate that workers undergo pre-employment, periodic, and special health examinations to ensure that the employment relationship does not endanger the health and safety of the worker or the surrounding community. Within this regulatory framework, doctors must navigate the intersection between medical science and legal responsibility, a space where errors may give rise to legal disputes, civil liability, or even criminal sanctions (Anwar et al., 2023).

This research is important because the issue of legal responsibility of doctors in occupational health examinations is often overlooked or insufficiently analyzed in existing literature. Many studies focus on occupational safety and health in general, or on the obligations of employers to provide safe working conditions, but relatively few examine the specific legal position of doctors as decision-makers in determining work capacity. The uniqueness of this research lies in its effort to fill this gap by comprehensively exploring the scope of legal responsibility borne by doctors, examining the potential risks of malpractice or negligence, and assessing the implications of their decisions in employment relationships (Anwar et al., 2023). Unlike prior studies that primarily address medical responsibility in clinical treatment or surgery, this research situates the doctor's responsibility in the context of preventive occupational health, where decisions are anticipatory and predictive in nature.

Another unique contribution of this study is the focus on the dual nature of the doctor's role: as a medical professional and as an actor within the legal system. Doctors must interpret clinical findings to predict whether a worker is capable of carrying out certain duties without risk to themselves or others, while at the same time ensuring that their determination complies with legal standards, ethical principles, and labor regulations (Anwar et al., 2023). This duality creates a complex field of responsibility that demands critical analysis. The research also emphasizes the social justice dimension,

recognizing that workers' rights to fair assessment, nondiscrimination, and access to safe employment are directly affected by doctors' decisions.

Based on the researcher's search results, similar studies were found but with several differences, including Sekar Asih Rengganis, with the thesis title, "Analysis of the Implementation of Health Checks on Employees in the Production Department of PT. Frisian Flag Indonesia in 2012. Then there is Albertus Fredi Susanto, with a thesis titled "The Implementation of Corporate Legal Responsibility in Fulfilling Workers' Health Rights Through Health Services Provided by Company Clinics." Next is the research by Ridwan et al. (Center for Occupational Health and Safety Development, Makassar, 2019, with the thesis title, "Evaluation of the Implementation of Health Checks for Workers at BBPK3 Makassar". From the previous studies mentioned above, there has been no research that specifically discusses the legal responsibility of doctors in determining work eligibility (Wibowo, 2024).

It is not uncommon for companies to pressure doctors to provide examination results that are "beneficial" to the company, for example, by declaring workers fit for work even though their health condition is not yet fully stable. In addition, limitations in equipment, time, or access to complete medical records often hinder doctors from making accurate assessments. Determining fitness for work by a doctor is not merely an administrative matter, but a medical decision that carries legal risks (Wahyuni et al., 2021). If a doctor declares someone fit for work when they do not meet the medical requirements, and then a work accident occurs related to that health condition, the doctor may be held accountable ethically, civilly, or even criminally. The discrepancy between reality and regulations that do not explicitly regulate the status of doctors working in a company who examine workers' health must be addressed (Mahanani, 2020).

2. Materials and Methods

The type of research that will be used in this thesis is normative legal research. Normative legal research examines the law from an internal perspective, with legal norms as its object of study (Budianto, 2020). This research is descriptive and analytical in nature, describing the research results with data that is as complete and detailed as possible. In addition, the research will use prescriptive analysis, projecting the extent of doctors' responsibility for the workability of workers (Rohman et al., 2024).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 *The Role and Authority of Doctors in Determining Work Eligibility Based on the Results of Worker Health Examinations*

Article 28 H paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (UUD NRI 1945) states that every person has the right to live in physical and spiritual prosperity, to have a place to live and a good and healthy environment, and to receive health services. In fact, every person has the right to receive high-quality, safe health services, which is a fundamental right for every individual. Health is an indicator for measuring the success of human development, and of course without health, humans will not be productive enough to live economically and receive a good education. Health is a human right and one of the elements of welfare that must be realized in accordance with the dreams of the Indonesian people as referred to in Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution (Jarvis, 2023).

Every activity and effort to improve the highest possible level of public health is carried out based on the principles of non-discrimination, participation, protection, and sustainability, which are fundamental to the development of Indonesia's human resources, the improvement of national resilience and competitiveness, and national development. National development must be based on a health perspective, which means that national development itself must take public health into account. If something happens that causes health problems for the Indonesian people, it will certainly cause significant economic losses for the country (Vuong, 2020). On the other hand, every successful effort to improve

public health will increase investment in national development. Thus, all parties, both the government and the community, are responsible for paying attention to public health.

Quality healthcare is a basic need for every member of society. Healthcare provided by medical professionals must comply with professional standards, standard operating procedures, and the medical needs of patients in the practice of medicine, because doctors are individuals who have the knowledge and skills to heal sick people. As individuals with knowledge in the field of medicine, doctors have the authority and license to provide healthcare services and examine and treat patients who come to them in accordance with the provisions of healthcare law (Jain et al., 2021).

The authority of doctors to conduct examinations and make decisions on fitness for work is based on laws and regulations, such as the Health Law, the Manpower Law, and the Minister of Manpower Regulation on Occupational Health and Safety (K3). This authority is inherent and legally valid, and must be exercised in accordance with medical standards, medical protocols, and professional ethics. Decisions made by doctors must be based on objective examination results, not pressure from companies or other parties. Doctors' legal responsibilities can cover three aspects. First, civil liability, if the doctor's negligence causes harm and the worker sues for compensation. Second, criminal liability, if there is evidence of gross negligence or even falsification of medical documents that endangers others (Wang et al., 2023). Third, ethical and disciplinary responsibility, where doctors may be sanctioned by their professional organizations (such as the Indonesian Medical Association or the Indonesian Medical Council) if they violate the professional code of ethics.

For example, in a heavy industry company, a doctor declares that a worker is fit to work in an area exposed to hazardous chemicals, even though the examination results show lung damage. If the worker then suffers organ damage due to this exposure, the doctor can be held liable for neglecting the principle of caution and medical examination standards. Accurate medical decisions are a form of legal protection for workers' rights to a safe and healthy working environment. If doctors do not carry out their roles and authorities properly, workers can be harmed or even lose their lives (Ziegler et al., 2020). Therefore, in legal liability theory, doctors as professionals must ensure that all their decisions are not only based on medical considerations, but also take into account legal aspects and worker safety.

The medical profession is one that requires mastery of clinical knowledge and skills, the implementation of which must comply with applicable rules and ethics. Doctors must have systematic thinking skills, which are related to the orderly and logical analysis of a problem so that doctors can identify the cause of the problem. The professional attitude of a doctor is one of propriety, respect, and the ability to perform their work well in accordance with existing standards (Chien et al., 2020). A professional doctor must prioritize the well-being of patients, even above their own personal interests. Professional behavior is part of the competencies that a doctor must master. Mastery of competencies that include attitude, knowledge, and skills in a balanced manner will enable a doctor to be competent and perform optimally.

Doctors have professional autonomy in determining examination results and medical recommendations. Legal responsibility requires doctors to be independent, not subject to corporate pressure or economic interests. If doctors compromise their principles for the sake of corporate interests, they may be considered to have violated the principle of legal responsibility by failing to maintain their professional objectivity. Within the framework of labor and occupational health law, doctors not only serve as medical personnel but also as guardians of workers' constitutional rights to health and safety protection. Therefore, legal responsibility is an important foundation in ensuring that doctors' roles and authorities are carried out professionally, objectively, and accountably (Kunyahamu et al., 2021). With a proper understanding and implementation of the theory of legal responsibility, every decision made by doctors in assessing work suitability will become an integral part of the labor protection legal system.

Based on Indonesian Medical Council Regulation No. 44 of 2011 concerning Professional Discipline for Doctors and Dentists, which emphasizes that doctors and dentists must practice medicine within the limits of their competence, and that doctors must have the knowledge and skills necessary to practice medicine (Soltes et al., 2021). Therefore, if a doctor treats a disease outside of their competence, due to a lack of knowledge and skills or a lack of available equipment, then a doctor or dentist is obliged to offer the patient a referral or consultation with another doctor or dentist who has the competence and other health services appropriate to the patient's medical needs.

3.2. *The Legal Responsibility of Doctors in Determining Work Capacity*

The findings of this research confirm that the determination of work capacity is not merely a medical procedure but a decision that carries binding legal implications. Doctors play a central role in assessing whether workers are physically and mentally able to perform certain tasks without jeopardizing safety. The issuance of a medical certificate of fitness or unfitness directly affects the employment relationship, influencing recruitment, continuity of work, and termination. Errors in this process can cause injustice for workers and potential liabilities for employers. Thus, the medical judgment made by doctors transcends health concerns and becomes an act of legal responsibility with consequences for multiple stakeholders (Nordling et al., 2020).

The study also demonstrates that the legal responsibility of doctors extends across four dimensions: civil, administrative, criminal, and ethical. From a civil perspective, doctors may be liable if negligence results in harm to workers or financial loss to employers. Administratively, professional councils and government regulators may impose sanctions for non-compliance with standards of practice. Criminal responsibility becomes relevant when intentional misconduct occurs, such as falsifying medical certificates. Ethical responsibility, grounded in professional codes, reinforces the principle that doctors must prioritize patient welfare and independence in decision-making. These overlapping dimensions reveal that legal responsibility is multifaceted and requires careful consideration of medical accuracy, legal standards, and professional integrity (Peter et al., 2022).

Another important finding is the presence of ethical dilemmas and potential conflicts of interest in practice. Doctors often face pressures from employers who may prefer that employees be declared fit in order to maintain productivity. At the same time, doctors have a duty to protect workers' rights to health and safety. Balancing these interests requires strong adherence to ethical guidelines and legal safeguards. Without such balance, the risk arises that workers' health could be compromised, or companies could become exposed to liability. Comparisons with practices in other countries suggest that stronger institutional safeguards, such as independent occupational health bodies, reduce conflicts of interest and enhance accountability, while weak systems tend to leave doctors vulnerable to external pressures.

The implications of errors in determining work capacity are far-reaching. For workers, an inaccurate assessment may lead to discrimination or exposure to dangerous conditions. For employers, reliance on flawed medical judgments can increase workplace accidents, legal disputes, and reputational harm. For the state, systemic errors undermine the enforcement of occupational safety policies and weaken protection for workers as mandated by labor law. This research highlights that transparent documentation and clear medical reasoning are critical to reducing disputes. In contexts where standardized reporting procedures exist, litigation tends to be lower, suggesting that procedural improvements could significantly strengthen accountability and trust in the system (Molenaar et al., 2023).

Comparative analysis with other studies indicates similarities in the challenges faced globally. Studies in advanced occupational health systems show that doctors often grapple with the dual role of medical examiner and legal actor. However, in systems where regulations provide clearer criteria and oversight mechanisms, disputes are resolved more fairly, and doctors enjoy stronger protection through legal certainty. This

contrasts with environments where ambiguity persists, leaving room for misinterpretation and inconsistent practices. The results of this research therefore support the need for legal reform to harmonize medical practice and legal accountability in occupational health contexts (Casas-Herrero et al., 2022).

Despite these findings, the study acknowledges several limitations. First, it relies heavily on normative analysis, which focuses on the interpretation of laws and regulations without capturing the full empirical realities of workplace health examinations. Second, the research scope is general and does not examine sector-specific complexities where higher risks apply, such as aviation, mining, or maritime industries. Third, the rapidly evolving nature of labor and health regulations means that conclusions may require updates as new laws or guidelines are introduced. Fourth, the comparative perspective is limited and does not fully explore variations across different legal systems. Finally, interpretation of findings is subject to scholarly bias, as alternative perspectives may emphasize different dimensions of responsibility (Naik et al., 2022).

In conclusion, this research establishes that doctors bear significant legal responsibility in determining work capacity, a role that transcends medical practice and extends into the realm of legal accountability. Their decisions influence not only individual workers and employers but also the broader enforcement of occupational safety and labor protection. The findings emphasize the need for clarity in legal standards, stronger ethical safeguards, and more effective oversight mechanisms. By situating medical judgment within a legal framework, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex responsibilities borne by doctors and underscores the importance of aligning medical accuracy with legal justice in the world of work (McClure et al., 2020).

4. Conclusions

The role and authority of doctors in determining work fitness based on the results of worker health examinations is an important part of efforts to protect occupational safety and health as regulated in Indonesian legislation. Doctors, particularly medical examiners or doctors who are competent in the field of occupational medicine, have professional and legal responsibilities in assessing the physical and mental condition of a worker to determine whether or not the worker is fit to perform their duties. The authority of doctors includes providing recommendations in the form of fit for work, unfit for work, or fit for work with conditions, based on comprehensive examination results that include medical history, physical examination, and other supporting tests. The assessment must be carried out objectively, independently, and with reference to applicable medical and legal standards, including the principles of medical ethics and occupational safety.

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