FACTOR RELATED TO OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG LECTURERS: A CASE STUDY IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

Stress is a critical disease caused by conditions in the workplace that negatively affect an individual's performance and overall well-being. This study aims to identify the relationship of workload, time pressure and work interruption on the level of stress among lecturers in one public university in Kelantan. The respondent consists of 247 (97 males and 150 females) lecturers. Questionnaire was used for data gathering. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used in analyzing the results. Findings reveal that the lecturers in studied university were facing high level of stress while doing their work. Overall results show that workload is the greatest source of stress among the lecturers. The findings were discussed and recommendation been offered.

Keywords: stress, lecturers, public university

INTRODUCTION (Capital Letter, Arial, Font size 10)

Working life is full of hassles, deadlines, frustrations, and demands. For many people, stress has become every day event in their life. Stress isn't always bad. In small doses, it could help you perform under pressure and motivate you to do your best. But when you're constantly running in emergency mode, your mind and body pay the price. Stress could lead to serious mental and physical health problems. It could also change on your relationships at home and work.

In workplace, there are several factors contribute to workplace stress such as work demands, low levels of control, poor support from supervisor and co-workers, lack of role clarity, poorly managed change, bad work design, long working hours and etc. (Rossi, Quick, and Perrewe, 2010). The main purpose of this research is to identify the relationship between occupational factor such as workload, time pressure, work interruption and stress among lecturers. The significant contribution of this research is to help the workers and the university in identifying the factor contributes to stress and suggesting the preventing measure.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous studies found that stress influences the employees' job satisfaction and their overall performance in their work. Because most of the organizations now are more demanding for the better job outcomes. In fact, modern times have been called as the "age of anxiety and stress" (Coleman, 1976). The stress itself will be affected by number of stressors. Nevertheless, Beehr and Newman (1978) had defined stress as a situation which will force a person to deviate from normal functioning due to the change (i.e. disrupt or enhance) in his/her psychological and/or physiological condition, such that the person is forced to deviate from normal functioning. From the definition that has been identified by
researchers, we can conclude that it is truly important for an individual to recognize the stresses that are facing by them in their career. Some demographic factor may influence the way a university academic staff act in their workplace. Management role of an organization is one of the aspects that affect work-related stress among workers (Alexandros-Stamatios, Matilyn, and Cary, 2003). Workers in an organization can face occupational stress through the role stress that the management gave. Role stress means anything about an organizational role that produces adverse consequences for the individual (Kahn and Quinn, 1970). Management will have their own role that stands as their related. Role related are concerned with how individuals perceive the expectations other have of them and includes role ambiguity and role conflict (Alexandros-Stamatios et. al., 2003).

Family and work are inter-related and interdependent to the extent that experiences in one area affect the quality of life in the other (Sarantakos, 1996). Home-work interface can be known as the overlap between work and home; the two way relationship involves the source of stress at work affecting home life and vice versa effects of seafaring on home life, demands from work at home, no support from home, absent of stability in home life. It asks about whether home problems are brought to work and work has a negative impact on home life (Alexandros-Stamatios et al., 2003). For example, it questions whether the workers have to take work home, or inability to forget about work when the individual is at home. Home-work interface is important for the workers to reduce the level of work-related stress.

According to Lasky (1995) demands associated with family and finances can be a major source of ‘extra-organisational’ stress that can complicate, or even precipitate, work-place stress. Russo and Vitaliano (1995) argued that the occurrence of stressors in the workplace either immediately following a period of chronic stress at home, or in conjunction with other major life stressors, is likely to have a marked impact on outcome. Several studies have highlighted the deleterious consequences of high workloads or work overload. According to Wilkes, Beale, Hall, Rees, Watts, and Denne, (1998) work overloads and time constraints were significant contributors to work stress among community nurses. Workload stress can be defined as reluctance to come to work and a feeling of constant pressure (i.e. no effort is enough) accompanied by the general physiological, psychological, and behavioral stress symptoms (Beehr, Walsh and Taber, 1976).

Al-Aameri (2003) has mentioned in his studies that one of the six factors of occupational stress is pressure originating from workload. Alexandros-Stamatios et al. (2003) also argued that “factors intrinsic to the job” means explore workload, variety of tasks and rates of pay. Rapidly changing global scene is increasing the pressure of workforce to perform maximum output and enhance competitiveness. Indeed, to perform better to their job, there is a requirement for workers to perform multiple tasks in the workplace to keep abreast of changing technologies (Cascio, 1995; Quick, 1997). Beside than that, working in extended hours and large workloads while simultaneously meeting production targets and deadlines also lead to stress among workers. (Chan, Lai, Ko, and Boey, 2000).

Time pressure is another aspect that affects stress in the workplace. Time pressure is directly related to the amount of time that have been given to the employees’ to complete a task (Savage and Torgler (2012). Gelsema, van der Doef, Maes, Janssen, Akerboom and Verhoeven (2006); and Thompson, Dalgleish, Bucknall, Estabrooks, Hutchinson, Fraser, de Vos, Binnekade, Barrett and Saunders (2008) stated that time pressure occurs when the employees have insufficient time for completing required tasks. The limited time in completing the tasks will influence the performance and stress level (Chu and Spires, 2001; Kelly and McGrath, 1985).

Haines, Marchand, Genin and Rousseau (2012) also found that the time pressure also can directly have an impact on the strain producing stressor. This factor is triggered by several different factors at the workplace such as role ambiguity, heavy job demand, high competitive work environment and long working hours. Sonnentag, Arbeus, Mahn, and Fritz (2014), stated that times pressure specifically may intensify the relationship between exhaustion and decreased job satisfaction. When exhausted employees face time pressure, they will start to believe that they will not be able to meet the demands of their jobs and they will worry even more, resulting in a strong decrease in psychological detachment.
Beside the workload and time pressures, work interruptions also one of contributors to stress. An interruption has been defined as incidents or occurrences that impede or delay organizational members as they attempt to make progress on work tasks (Jett and George, 2003). Interruptions are ubiquitous in organizational life, and they occur frequently, in a variety of ways and forms. For example, unexpected meetings and conversations throughout the day interrupt the work patterns among managers (Berger and Merritt, 1998; Grove, 1983; Mintzberg, 1990; Thomas and Ayres, 1998). Given the fact that many jobs entails multiple and shifting tasks, the onset of an extra activity that requires immediate attention can interrupt a person's work on a current task (Cellier and Eyrolle, 1992; Kirmeyer, 1988).

Physical and psychological work environment also can create interruptions in the workplace. Informal work climates and open office layouts, designed to promote flexibility and conserve space, bring people close together and increase the likelihood of unplanned physical encounters that interrupt a person's work (Oldham, Kulik, and Stepina, 1991; Perlow, 1999). Background noise or the nearby conversations with others may be a nuisance, interrupting a person's concentration (Oldham et al., 1991).

Moreover, advances in information technology have increased the number of ways that one person or group can interrupt another. For example, e-mail and other forms of electronic communication have joined telephones and faxes as communication media whose pervasive use has increased the possibility of interruptions in a person's work (Czerwinski, Cutrell, and Horvitz, 2000).

An interruption may have negative consequences for the person being interrupted to the extent that they result in insufficient time to perform time-sensitive tasks, stress or anxiety associated with heightened feelings of time pressure, and/or a disturbance in a person's state of total involvement in the task being performed (Jett and George, 2003).

Based on above discussion, previous finding show that workload, time pressure and work interruption has significant relation with stress level among employees’. Therefore, this paper will examine how these variables affect the stress among lecturers in one public university.

**Statement of the Problem**

The work lives of academic staff in Malaysian public universities are tough. This situation is arising from diverse factors; the pressure for improved graduate output from the public, the pressure to generate knowledge through research that will give the nation a competitive advantage in the global market, increased workload emanating from teaching and administrative responsibilities, not so suitable work environment, family expectations and the pressure to grow on the job Ahsan, Abdullah, Fie and Alam (2009).

The increasing number of university in Malaysia for the recent years also creates a pressure among Malaysian lecturers where they may face problems with their job as the universities managements start pushing their staff to facing competitive pressure from other universities. Other than that, keeping the world ranks becoming the setting of new goal to compete with other universities as well as the filing and documentation burden. This may lead the lecturers to face plenty of stress and therefore affect their job satisfaction and even their physical or mental health. Earlier study by Ahsan et al. (2009) also found that the level of stress among academics was significantly high. This study aims to identify a significant relationship between occupation-related variable which constitute sources of stress to lecturers in one public university in Malaysia. Lecturers have been selected because educators have been consistently identified as a group experiencing high stress at work (Sigler and Wilson, 1988).
Research Question and Hypothesis

The following research questions were raised in the course of the study:
1. What is the level of stress among lecturer?
2. Is there a significant relationship between workload, time pressure and interruption with stress among the lecturer?

To answer the research question, the researchers developed the hypothesis as below:

H1: Workload has significant relationship with stress among lecturer.
H2: Time pressure has significant relationship with stress among lecturer.
H3: Interruption has significant relationship with stress among lecturer.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research is quantitative research using purposive sampling technique and has been conducted in the one public university located in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. The total population of current study was 252 lecturers from nine faculties. Unit of analysis is individual. A total of 252 questionnaires were distributed over the respective lecturers. A total of 274 respondents returned the completed questionnaire, representing a 98% response rate.

Measurement

Questionnaires with 33 questions in five different sections were designed to gather information from the respondents. Likert-scale with seven point type formats was used for question about the workload, time pressure, interruption and job stress. Questions on demographic information used ordinal and nominal scales.

Reliability of the questionnaire

The pilot test conducted as preliminary survey with main purpose to identify the reliability of the questionnaire adapted from past researcher. The result showed a significantly high value of reliability of all items above 0.70. This indicates a high level of internal consistency of the items (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010).

DATA ANALYSIS

Demographic characteristic

A majority of the respondents were female (60.7%) compared to male (39.3%), aged between 25 to 35 years old (41.7%), followed 36 to 45 years old (36.4%). This situation is normal as a majority of educators in Malaysia are women (Mohd. Faroque, 2003). Forty seven percent of the respondents had a length of tenure between one to five year works with the studied university.

Descriptive Statistics of variable

The mean, standard deviation and variance were obtained using SPSS. Mean score for all items is high as show in Table 1.
Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation of the Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Pressures</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interruptions</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Stress</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The correlation result showed a positive and direct significant relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable. Workload showed a relatively low positive significant relationship with stress among respondents with correlation value of 0.474 followed with time pressure (r = 0.321) and work interruption (r = 0.235). Based on these results, all hypotheses developed in the research have been accepted.

Table 2. Correlations between independent variables and dependent variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>0.474**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time pressure</td>
<td>0.321**</td>
<td>0.172**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Interruption</td>
<td>0.235**</td>
<td>0.119*</td>
<td>0.102*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < 0.05 (2-tailed)  ** p < 0.01 (2-tailed)

Table 3 represents the model summary. The R-value in the model summary is 0.836, showing a strong linear relationship between variables. The R square value in the model summary is 0.787. This value indicates that 78.7 percent of the variation in stress may be explained by the relationship between independent variables.

Table 3. Model Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R-Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R-Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.836</td>
<td>0.787</td>
<td>0.757</td>
<td>.5549</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Regression equation and related statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Model Coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>.551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>.438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time pressure</td>
<td>.209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interruption</td>
<td>.073</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 displays the regression equation for every significant factor with the stress among respondents.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to identify the relationship of occupation-related factors and stress among lecturers in one public university. From the data analysis, workload has been identified as the
main factors that have significant and positive relationship with stress among the respondent, followed with time pressure, and work interruption. This is in line with the findings of Ahsan et al. (2009), Ingviason, Kleinhenz, Beavis, Berwick, Carthy and Willkeinson (2005) who supported that almost all educators described their workload as heavy and that at certain peak periods when their work load exceeded their capacity to manage, their teaching effectiveness and efficiencies are negatively affected due to stress associated with workload.

In support of the above, Egu (2013) observed that the biggest cause of stress is teacher workload. This author added that when educators are made to teach too many students, mark their scripts, stress sets in making them unable to meet-up deadlines, their effectiveness become questionable. The results also consistent and supported with others past researches that proved that workload are inclusive and important factor that contribute to stress among employees regardless their type job and work sectors (Rossi et al., 2010).

Management plays major roles in helping their work in dealing with stress caused by the works. It starts with the development and implementation of stress management policy in their workplace. Stress management policy is a statement of commitment made by the employer in protecting their workers from stress hazards. It also talks about the management and workers responsibility in reducing the hazards. Stress management training also is the best way in helping the workers to identifying and coping with the stress. Two way communications and feedback is another method in helping the employer to identify the specific problems and issues of stress among their workers. Freedom in work and less control by the management also contribute in reducing stress in the workplace.

REFERENCES


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