

**Predictors And Health Outcomes Of Job Stress: A
Study Of Retail Salespersons In The Pharmaceutical
Industry Of Penang**

**By;
MUNESY DORAISAMY**

**Universiti Sains Malaysia
Penang, Malaysia**

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents; Mr M.Doraisamy and Mdm. S.Kalyani, who gave me an appreciation of learning and taught me the value of perseverance and resolve. I also dedicate this to my wife, A.Subashni, and my sons, Kishen and Sacheendhraan, for their unfaltering support and understanding while I was completing this thesis.

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ABSTRAK

Ketegangan kerja merupakan topik yang popular kerana isu ketegangan kerja mempunyai pengaruh negatif yang konsisten ke atas individu. Kajian ini bertujuan mengenal pasti sama ada variabel organisasi (formalisasi, pemusatan, kawalan kerja, dan iklim organisasi), variabel peranan (konflik peranan, kekaburan peranan, dan bebanan peranan) dan pemboleh ubah personaliti (efikasi diri) mempengaruhi ketegangan kerja. Hasil analisa ke atas 204 sampel jurujual di Pulau Pinang menunjukkan majoriti daripada mereka mempunyai ketegangan kerja yang tinggi. Variabel organisasi (formalisasi, pemusatan, dan iklim organisasi) mempunyai perhubungan positif dengan ketegangan kerja. Konflik peranan juga menjadi punca kepada ketegangan kerja. Depresi dan keresahan daripada kerja akan mengugat kesihatan mental jurujual.

ABSTRACT

Job stress has been the popular subject due to its consistent findings that stress has been an unhealthy effect on an individuals' mental health. The purpose of this study is to examine whether organizational variables (formalization, centralization, job control, and perceptions of organizational politics), role variables (role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload) and personality variable (self-efficacy) affects job stress. Results from a sample of 204 retail salespersons in Penang state, suggested that a majority of them suffered from relatively higher levels of job stress. The present research reveals that organizational factors (formalization, centralization, and perception of organizational politics) are positively associated with job stress among retail salespersons. Second, role variables also play a critical role in determining the level of job stress salesperson would experience at work, namely, role conflict. Job stress causing detrimental effects on individual's mental health, namely, depression and anxiety.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter provides the background and presents the problem of the study. Specifically, it includes the background of the study, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, significance and scope of this study and definitions of key terms.

1.1 Background

Salespersons in retail outlets are working in highly competitive working environments, characterized by lack of time, background interruption, lack of space, and general uncertainty that have resulted in job stress. Job stress at the work place can cause some other health problems to the individual. Most of the health problems are related to psychological changes (Hellersted & Jeffery, 1997). Salesperson may continually worry about a particular project, feel unfairly treated by a supervisor or co-workers, or knowingly accept more than he/she can handle in hopes of earning a promotion. Workplace stress can easily overwhelm our life, work-related depression is a clinical illness and workers should take this seriously (National Institute of Mental Health, 2001, as cited in Aziah, Rusli, Winn, Naing & Tengku, 2004).

Job stress is a widely discussed and researched topic. Numerous studies have been conducted in this field, mostly just to understand the factors that can cause job stress. Stress at work is more of a problem than ever before: studies show that job stress levels are

rising (Lu, 1999). In today's fast moving and technologically advanced workplace, stress and tensions are some common problems encountered by salesperson. Stress can cause physiological strain reactions in the organism when exposed to various environmental stimuli called stressors (Fai & Ping, 2002). Stress is not the same for all people at all times, and different people try to manage stress in various ways (Makikangas & Kinnunen, 2003).

Along with its emotional toll, prolonged job related stress can drastically affect the employee's psychological health. Terluin, Rhenen, Schaufelis and Haan (2004), identified four symptoms that proved to be necessary and sufficient to describe the whole range of common psychological complaints: 'distress', 'depression', 'anxiety' and 'somatization'.

Constant preoccupation with job responsibilities often leads to erratic eating habits and not enough exercise, resulting in weight problems, high blood pressure, and elevated cholesterol levels (Tsutsumi, Kayaba, Yoshimura, Sawada, Ishikawa, Sakai, Gotoh, Nago, & Jichi, 2003). Common job stressors such as perceived low rewards, a hostile work environment, and long hours can also accelerate the onset of heart disease, including the likelihood of heart attacks (Kirkcaldy et al. 1999).

Job stress also frequently causes burnout, a specific type of strain that reflects a belief that the resources for coping with stressful conditions are scarce or nonexistence, leading one to experience a sense of hopelessness, fatigue, and cognitive defeat (Lee &

Ashforth, 1993, as cited in Perrewe, Hochwarter, Rossi, Wallace, Maignan, Castro, Ralston, Westman, Vollmer, Tang, Wan, & Deusen, 2002). Burnout can lead to depression, which, in turn, has been linked to a variety of other health concerns such as heart disease and stroke, obesity and eating disorders, diabetes, and some forms of cancer and also reduces employee's immunity to other types of illnesses, and can even contribute to premature death (Sperry, 1987).

The retail business is a fast expanding industry in Malaysia. According to The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited (2004), retail sales (in nominal value terms) are estimated to have reached US\$14.5billionn in 2003, up by 52% on five years earlier in year in 2003. The growth is very huge. Hence, the retail salespersons would have an important role in achieving this figure. Furthermore over the years, Malaysian shoppers have become more discerning and sophisticated in their tastes and lifestyles. As a result of that, the retail sector in Malaysia is a fast growing sector. In order to stay competitive, the retail companies work smartly to attract more customers to them. Salespersons are the person who interact with customers in delivering the anticipated sales services to customers and responsible for putting strategy into operation in their encounters with customers in retail outlets (Wetzels, Ruyter & Bloemer, 2000).

1.2 Problem Statement

Stress is caused by various kinds of stressors. Stressors can be divided into three types such as physical environment, individual, and group and organization (Fai & Ping,

2002). According to Kahn et al. (1964) as cited in Perrewe et al. (2002), the antecedents and consequences of role stress have been central to the study of occupational stress.

Besides, most of the stressors in the occupational environment generate negative changes in the individual, in physical, psychological and behavioral terms (Grau, Salanova & Peiro, 2001). This literature reflects researchers' belief that stress is a major factor affecting people's lives, is intimately tied with mental health, and is very possibly linked with many problems of physical health (Hobfoll, 1989).

Lu (1999) also stated that job stress has become one of the most serious health issues of the twentieth century; where it is a problem not just for individuals in terms of physical and mental disability, but for employers and governments who have started to assess the financial damage. Stress can causes negative impacts on performances of the employees as well to employers and government (Lu, 1999). Therefore, it is important to do research about job stress and the ways to overcome it.

This study was conducted among retail salespersons in retail pharmacies in state of Penang. The retail industry is a key sector of Malaysia's vibrant economy (The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, 2004). There is increasing focus on creating better skills, improve customer service and retail productivity by certain retailers; especially Guardian Pharmacy, Watsons Personal Care Stores, and Georgetown Pharmacy.

To the researcher's knowledge, no study has been conducted on job stress among salespersons in health care retail settings in Malaysia. For Instance, Beng (2003) examined organizational variables, job variables, and job stress: the moderating effects of personality among paid-dealers within the stock broking firms in Penang. On the other hand, Kumaresan (2002) investigated antecedents and outcomes of job stress: a study among managers in the electronics industry in Penang. Therefore, this study intends to bridge the gap in the literature by examining the retail salespersons' predictors and consequences of job stress. The outcome of this study will help to create the awareness among the health care retailers in order them to manage the job stress; which tend to incur higher operating cost (Fai et al., 2002). Besides, despite its long history in management research, our understanding of what constitutes the "truth" about the role of employee well-being in organizational behaviour is both far from complete and subject to much misunderstanding (Diener, Lucas & Scollon, 2006).

This study was conducted a research on 'Predictors and Health Outcomes Of Job Stress: A Study Of Retail Salespersons In The Pharmaceutical Industry Of Penang'. This study will investigate;

1. How the variables affect the salesperson?
2. What are the damages brought by the job stressors to an employee's health behavior?

Besides, this study concentrates on a very different sample from previous job stress studies.

1.3 Research Objective

This study attempts to:

1. Examine the level of job stress experienced by retail salesperson in the pharmaceutical industry.
2. Examine relationship between Organizational variables (formalization, centralization, job control, and perceptions of organizational politics) and job stress.
3. Examine the relationship between role variables (role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload) and job stress.
4. Examine the relationship between personality traits (self-efficacy) and job stress.
5. Examine the relationship between job stress and mental health (depression and anxiety).

The findings of this study will contribute to the understandings of the factors that influence employees' job stress. In addition, this study hopes to determine the influence of job stress on mental health. Furthermore, this study will integrate both the antecedents and outcome of job stress. Specifically, the study sought to investigate the effect of job stress on mental health of retail salespersons in the pharmaceutical industry of Malaysia.

1.4 Research Question

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of job stress experienced by retail salesperson in the pharmaceutical industry?
2. What is the relationship between Organizational variables (formalization, centralization, job control, and perceptions of organizational politics) and job stress?
3. What is the relationship between role variables (role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload) and job stress?
4. What is the relationship between personality traits (self-efficacy) and job stress?
5. What is the relationship between job stress and mental health (depression and anxiety)?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is mainly to determine the antecedents and consequences of retail salespersons job stress. The findings from this study may help employees find ways to reduce job-related stress. The employees should maintain a balance between work and personal life. Salespersons effectiveness on the job, their long-term health, and the overall quality of their life all depend on it. Managing job stress will give a salesperson the tools to deal confidently with their chronic stressors, so he/she can move through his/her day with greater balance and relieve. Managing job stress is very important for healthier life. Besides, the findings of this study may find some useful ways to reduce the job stress among salespersons in retail pharmaceutical industry.

1.6 Major Variables of the study

Job stress is the key variable in this study. Stress in this study adopts the definition by Beehr and Newman (1978) as cited in Schuler (1982). Job stress defined as a condition wherein job related factors interact with the worker to change (disrupt or enhance) his/her psychological or physiological condition such that the person (mind and/or body) is forced to deviate from normal functioning.

The independent variables in this study can be divided into 2 categories namely, organizational variables and role variables. The organizational variables include formalization, centralization, perceived of organizational politics (Perception of organizational politics) and job control. In this study, all the variables are defined as follows;

Formalization in this study is defined as the degree to which the norms of the organization are explicitly defined (Camps & Cruz, 2000).

Centralization as the level in the hierarchy of authority at which a decision has to be approved before being implemented (Camps & Cruz, 2000).

Job Control defined as the extent to which employees are able to make their own decision about work (Makikangas & Kinnunen, 2003).

Perceptions of Organizational Politics (Perception of organizational politics) is defined as the perceptions individuals hold about the political nature of their work environment influence the way they do their jobs (Kacmar, Michele, Carlson, & Dawn, 1997).

Role variables of this study included 3 types of roles namely, role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload. In this study, these variables are defined as follows;

Role conflict is defined as resulting from violation of the two classical principals and causing decreased individual satisfaction and decreased organizational effectiveness (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970).

Role ambiguity is defined as lack of the necessary information available to a given organizational position (Rizzo et al. 1970).

Role overload is defined as having a heavy workload that interferes with work quality, and the feeling of not being able to finish an ordinary day's work in one day (Kahn et al. 1964; Kahn, 1980, as cited in Conley & Woosley 1999).

Personality variable of this study is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined as an individual's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute a course of action needed to meet the demands of a situation following the definition proposed by Bandura (1997), as cited in Jimmieson (2000).

Mental health in this study is characterized by specific mental symptoms, such as anhedonia in the case of depressive illness, or uncontrollable fears in the case of anxiety disorder following the definition by Terluin, Rhenen, Schaufelis and Haan, (2004).

According to Terluin et al. (2004) mental health comprised of two dimensions: depression and anxiety.

Depression represents depressive thoughts (including suicidal ideation) and loss of pleasure (anhedonia), i.e. symptoms that are characteristic of clinical depression (i.e. mood disorder) as defined by Terluin et al. (2004).

Anxiety encompasses symptoms such as free-floating anxiety, panic attacks, phobic anxiety, and avoidance behaviour, i.e. symptoms that are characteristic of clinical anxiety (i.e. anxiety disorder) as defined by Terluin et al. (2004).

1.7 Organization of Remaining Chapters

This thesis has five chapters. Chapter 1, presents the background of the study, and explains the significance of it. It also presents the research objectives, problem statement and research questions and the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2 presents a review of previous studies concerning the independent and dependent variables investigated in this study. Based on the literature review, the theoretical framework of the investigation is developed. Subsequently, several hypotheses are formulated.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology used in present study. Discussion emphasizes on research design, basis of sampling, the method for data collection and data analysis technique.

Chapter 4 outlines the findings from the data analysis. Chapter 5 discusses the findings and conclusion of the study. This chapter will also compare the findings to previous studies, discuss the limitations of the proposed research and give suggestions on future studies in the area.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In recent years, many researchers are paying more attention to factors that affect job stress and its consequences towards the well-being of workers. Job stress has deleterious effects on workers. The working life has changed dramatically compared with few decades ago. These changes have increased the level of work stressors and lowered the level of employee's well-being (Makikangas et al., 2003). Stress places physical demands on the human body and mind which will result in detrimental consequences for the individual (Maki, Moore, Grunberg & Greenberg, 2005).

Salespersons are facing a lot of challenges in their daily work environment. According to Makikangas et al. (2003), stress is main cause for the health problems that faced by the workers. Furthermore, Moncrief et al. (1997) strongly revealed that stress can lead to physical illness and chronic diseases, such as heart disease, mental ill-health, depression or other problems such as drug abuse and alcoholism.

Salespersons are the front liners who interact with customers every day. They are the people who have the most contact with customers and provide the best customer service to customers. In this service encounter era, many researchers have found that salespersons have to deal with 'back stage' demands from supervisors as well as the needs and wishes of customers (Wetzels, Ruyter & Bloemer, 2000).

2.1.2 An overview of Job Stress

Stress is understood as the emotional or biophysical reaction of an organism to stress stimuli (Miller & McCool, 2003). Job stress is caused by organization variables and role variables (Fai & Ping, 2002; Moncrief et al. 1997). As we know, in the sales industries, the sales strategies can create unprecedented levels of job stress in sales organization. According to Wetzels et al. (2000), stress cause undesirable effects to the organization commitment, salesperson's commitment to quality and eventually perceive service quality. Servicing the customers in more attractive way is the main motive of current retailers. Service can be a factor that will attract customers on top of their offering prices. Most of the previous job stress models suggested that the stressors in working environment creates negative changes in the individual, in physical, psychological and behavioral terms (Grau et al. 2001). Salespeople are in a boundary-spanning role and have to cope with multiple expectations from customers and management. Role stress is inherent to salespeople, because, as boundary spanners, they often face multiple and often conflicting expectations from customers and the organization (Chonko & Burnett 1983; Dubinsky & Mattson 1979, as cited in Jaramillo, Mulki & Soloman, 2006).

The organizational conditions most frequently identified and researched as stressors are job qualities, roles in the organizations and relationships at work and the job qualities commonly associated with stress are work underload and work overload (both qualitative and quantitative), although only limited research exists regarding underload (Schuler, 1982). This study will solely investigate the job stress factors; organizational variables, role variables and personal variable.

2.2 Theories Associated with Job Stress

2.2.1 Transactional Stress Theory

A model of stress in organizations is important not only because it provides an understanding of what stressors exist in an organization and how they work, but also because it shows what the outcomes of stress are, and what and where qualities of individuals influence their stress in organizations (Miller & McCool, 2003). The transactional model differentiates various classes of construct that interact dynamically. The components of the transactional process model are the environmental stressors, individual characteristics and individual responses (Miller & McCool, 2003). Within transactional theory, stress is the result of a perceived imbalance between the demands of a person's environment and the available resources the person possesses to respond to them (Aldwin, 1994; Cohen, Evans, Stokols, & Krantz, 1986; Evans & Cohen, 1987; Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Lazarus & Launier, 1978, as cited Miller & Mccool, 2003).

2.2.2 Role Theory

Role theory states that individuals become dissatisfied and performance drops when behaviors expected from them are inconsistent (Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman 1970). Besides, Van Sell, Brief and Schuler, 1981, as cited in Schuler 1982, also mentioned that the two qualities of roles in the organization which have been widely researched are role conflict and role ambiguity. Role conflict occurs when the salesperson believes that group expectations and demands are incompatible and cannot be simultaneously satisfied (Walker, Churchill, and Ford 1975, as cited in Jaramillo et al., 2006). On the other hand,

role ambiguity results when the salesperson is unclear about the duties and actions required in her or his job (Walker, Churchill, and Ford 1975, as cited in Jaramillo et al., 2006). Robinson and Griffiths, (2005), as cited in Jaramillo et al. (2006) also revealed that a recent study showed that increased workload was the most frequently cited source of stress, comprising 38 percent of all stressful events.

2.3 Antecedents of Job Stress

2.3.1 Organizational Variables

In this new era, in retail setting, the salespersons are responsible for the floor operation, dealing with customers, replenishing the stocks, and providing good services to customers. They are the person responsible to deliver the company's goal in serving better their customers. Moncrief et al. (1997) stated that large companies are moving more towards a more customer oriented selling culture, changing their infrastructures to provide flexibility and faster decision making, removing the barriers between manufacturing, sales, logistics and customers, concentrating on improving selling effectiveness and contribution to profitability, and creating different sales approaches, management structures and compensation plans for different market segments. As a result of these changes the salesperson's jobs become more complex and complicated than those days. These changes leads to job stress where the employees will have to work hard to deliver the companies intended tasks.

Therefore, this study will mainly focus on four organizational variables namely, formalization, centralization, perception of organizational politics, and job control. The literature pertaining to these variables will be discussed thoroughly as follows.

2.3.1.1 Formalization

Formalization is the degree to which the standard policies of the organization are clearly defined (Camps & Cruz, 2000). Sales managers exert their authority over their sales force by formalizing salesperson's jobs. Past studies stated that formalization is used as a way to direct, influence, and shape salespersons' behaviors so that there is little variability in their behaviors (Jaworski, 1988, Flamholtz, 1983 & Michel et al 1986, as cited in Agarwal, 1999). Agarwal (1993) indicate that formalization is imperative for coordination, however, conflicts with a salesperson's desire for autonomy and leads to negative attitudes such as higher role stressors (e.g., role ambiguity and role conflict). Besides, formalization limits the flexibility of boundary role position (Clopton, 1984; Michael et al., 1987, as cited in Wetzels et al., 2000).

2.3.1.2 Centralization

Centralization is the level in the hierarchy of authority at which a decision has to be approved before being implemented (Camps & Cruz, 2000). If the salesperson is not allowed to do their own decision; they will encounter problems with customers. Furthermore, the salesperson also has to deal with the demands of their supervisors too. Wetzels et al. (2000) also stated that in their boundary spanning role, retail salesperson are limited in their flexibility to go beyond the normal call of duty by organizational

guidelines procedures, while customizing retail services to a customer's needs, or 'adaptive servicing', will often be critical to a favorable evaluation of service quality. These conflicting demands frequently lead to role stress. From the point of view of organization theory, centralization is understood to be inversely related to the levels of uncertainty and ambiguity (Hage and Aiken, 1970; Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967, as cited in Camps and Cruz, 2000).

2.3.1.3 Job Control

Job control is defined as the extent to which employees are able to make their own decision about work (Makikangas & Kinnunen, 2003). In any organizations, employees are more satisfied if they have adequate freedom and authority to do their job. According to Wetzels et al., (2000) service organizations is frequently referred to as the involvement model, which has its roots in participation management, where the front line salespersons are capable of coordination and control of service quality. These employees should be trained and empowered in order to perform certain necessary task in accordance to time and situation in order to fulfil customer expectations. Employees also must be competent when given the authority to performing their role (Wetzels et al., 2000). The opportunity to exert some degree of control over one's work has been identified as a key factor that prevents stress and burnout even under conditions of high demand (Low, Cravens, Grant & Moncrief, 2001; Wetzels et al., 2000). Besides, the organization should establish the goal or target and let employees determine how they will work out to achieve the goal (e.g., set the yearly target sale and the rewards if they achieve it).

2.3.1.4 Perceptions of Politics

Perception of organizational politics is defined as the perceptions individuals hold about the political nature of their work environment influence the way they do their jobs (Kacmar, Michele, Carlson, & Dawn, 1997). Some of the employees are not satisfied with the management of their organization due to the unfair treatment among the workers, so called “Office Politics”. Organizational politics is a general name that denotes power relations and influence tactics in and around the workplace (Mintzberg, 1983; Pfeffer, 1992, as cited in Gadot et al., 2003). When individuals or group of people use certain strategies to achieve personal goals instead of organizational goals, they are said to be engaging in office politics (Fai & Ping, 2002). When the other individuals who do not involve themselves in office politics are perceived to be disagreement and feel distress. According to Ferris et al. (1989), as cited in Miller, Rutherford and Kolodinsky, (2008), there is a positive relationship between political perceptions and job stress.

2.3.2 Role Variables

Certain role variables also lead to job stress for employees. The company should examine the design of job task of employees in order to overcome or reduce job related stress. Sometimes heavy workloads with limited time frame will cause extreme stressful conditions to the employees if they cannot finish the task on time. According to Makikangas, (2001), many employees nowadays work under increasing time pressure and mental strain, where during this recession period the employees are finding themselves overworked due to increasing demands from work such as having too much to do or working long hours.

Job pressures are a major source of stress (Lu, 1989). Several job conditions have been identified as increasing stress in most employees. Role overload is one such condition (Jaramillo et al., 2008). Although some employees may have the ability to do the job, they may not have enough time to do the amount of work necessary. Other employees lack the ability to do the job, being unable to meet the performance standards or expectations set by the employer.

Sales force researchers have long been interested in identifying factors that can influence the salesperson's role conflict and role ambiguity (e.g., Behrman and Perreault 1984; Walker, Churchill, and Ford 1975, as cited in Jaramillo et al., 2008). The researcher decided to choose role overload, role conflict, and role ambiguity in this research.

2.3.2.1 Role Conflict

Role conflict is defined as resulting from violation of the two classical principals and causing decreased individual satisfaction and decreased organizational effectiveness (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). Salespersons are the one who have to deal with 'back stage' demands from superiors as well as the needs and wishes of customers (Wetzels et al., 2000). Sometimes, they may face situations where they are expected to meet the demands from their company or superior and customers, with each expecting something that is conflicting. Besides, some of the expectations of the company and customers may clashes. For example, as a retail outlet manager would expect the salesperson to serve as

many customers as possible during a given time, but a customer at the same time may demand for salesperson's personal attention. An employee, who notices inconsistencies between his or her written job description and requests from manager, will experience role conflict which will lead to job stress among salesperson (Rizzo et al. 1970).

2.3.2.2 Role Ambiguity

Role ambiguity is defined as lack of the necessary information available to a given organizational position (Rizzo et al. 1970). Salespersons mostly work on the 'front floor' of the retail shop (Wetzels et al., 2000). They are responsible to put the company's strategies into operation in their encounters with customers in retail outlets. When the information does not flow from management to the salesperson, they may do not know company's expectation from them, the organizations objective and the scope and responsibilities of their job. Role ambiguity occurs when a person does not have access to sufficient information to perform their role as an employee adequately (Wetzels et al., 2000). Fai and Ping (2002) stated that employees who are suffering from role ambiguity are more likely to experience lower job satisfaction, a greater incidence of job-related tensions, greater feelings of futility and lower levels of self-confidence. A salesperson who feels that she/he does not have enough information to perform the job adequately may experience role ambiguity which will lead to increases in job stress (Moncrief et al., 1996).

2.3.2.3 Role Overload

Role over load is defined as having a heavy workload that interferes with work quality, and the feeling of not being able to finish an ordinary day's work in one day (Kahn et al. 1964; Kahn, 1980, as cited in Conley & Woosley 1999). Organizational restructuring, reorganizing, and an increasing emphasis on productivity improvements have resulted in employees being saddled with increased responsibilities (Jaramillo et al., 2008). Besides, some employees may struggle to cope with heavy workload and this result in stress. According to Fai and Ping (2002), employees who are experiencing work overload for a certain period of time can lead to burnout.

Normally, sales people need to carry out more tasks during their daily working life; such as dealing with customers, work closely with manufacturing and logistics department, need to maintain timely delivery, and have to achieve the sales target. In certain circumstances, salespeople are required to spend their time in nonselling activities such as writing reports and attending meetings, which they may consider a waste of their time and an impediment to realizing their income potential (Jaramillo, Mulki, and Locander 2006, as cited in Jaramillo et al., 2008).

2.3.3 Personality Variable

The tendency to perceived job circumstances as stressful depends in part upon the personal characteristics of the individual. Individual exposed to the same environmental conditions may express remarkably different psychological, physical, and behavioral reactions on account of different personality characteristics (Kahn & Byosiere, 1992, as

cited in Makikangas & Kinnunen, 2003). Self-efficacy is one of the personality variables which were widely researched by many researchers (for instance, Jimmieson, 2000; Makikangas & Kinnunen, 2003; Grau et al., 2001; Perrewe et al., 2002). According to Grau et al. (2001), self-efficacy is relevant in the study of stress and work, fulfilling a moderating role.

2.3.3.1 Self-Efficacy

Researchers have conceptualized generalized self-efficacy as the confidence in one's own coping skills that is manifested in a wide range of challenging situations, and which has a broad and stable nature (Schwarzer, 1999 as cited in Grau et al., 2001). Essentially, self-efficacy refers to a sense of mastery and control over one's environment (Perrewe et al., 2002). Self-efficacy may influence the relationship between work control and employee adjustment (Jimmieson, 2000). Besides, self-efficacy has been argued to be an important variable when examining the health consequences of occupational stress (Perrewe et al., 2002).

2.4 Mental Health as Outcome of job stress

The job stress causes some negative impacts on the salesperson's mental health (Warr, 1990). According to Lu (1999), stress has become the most severe health issues of the twentieth century because it does not only affect the individuals in terms of physical and mental disability, but also the employers and government. It is important for the higher management and the government to do further research to minimize or overcome the job stress and to enhance the well-being of employees. Many studies reveal that

stressful work events were the stressor most strongly associated with mental health problems (Warr, 1996). The job stress can bring some behavioral changes (e.g., alcohol and drug abuse, emotional outburst, excessive smoking, procrastination, impatience, quickness, to argue, withdrawal or isolation from others, neglect of responsibility and impulsive behavior) and physiological changes (e.g., increase in heart rate, blood pressure, increase in blood glucose levels, dryness of mouth, sweating, hot and cold flashes, fatigue, insomnia, indigestion and gastrointestinal ailments) (Fai & Ping, 2002).

According to Taylor and Greisen (1999), even though an employee from any occupational category may be subjected to a work environments conducive to the development of job strain, human service employees are at the highest risk for developing such since, by the nature of their jobs, they have more frequent interaction with the public. Retail salespersons in retail outlets are interact with the customers' everyday of their working days (Wetzels et al., 2000). We can classify the sales people's job in retail outlets as 'high strain job'. 'High strain jobs' have high demands from his/ her job but with less authority to control. Past studies found that discretion was related to depression, whereas demand was related to anxiety (Lu, 1999). Psychological job demands refer to psychological stressors involved in accomplishing the work load, stressors related to unexpected tasks, and stressors of job-related personal conflict (Karasek, 1979, as cited in Terluin, 2004). Mental illness is characterized by specific mental symptoms, such as anhedonia in the case of depressive illness, or uncontrollable fears in the case of anxiety disorder (Terluin et al., 2004).

2.5 Demographic Variable

Three control variables were selected because they have been found to be relevant in retail setting studies; these were gender, age, and total working experience of salesperson. According to Rashed (2001), demographic variables such as gender, age, and working experience related to job stress.

According to Maki et al, (2005), there are no gender differences in the degree of exposure to workplace stressors, but women are more vulnerable to the effects of stress; or women are exposed to a greater magnitude of work stress than men. A study by Hellerstedt & Jeffery showed the association of reported strain and health characteristics differed between men and women; the women in this study reported a greater range of physical and behavioral responses to stress (Maki et al, 2005).

Jackson and Schuler (1985), as cited in Martin and Berthume (1993), found that lesser working experience was related to role variables. Besides, Bilgic (1998), as cited in Rashed (2001) found that working experience and age were related to job stress.