

WORK STRESS TOWARD WORK ENVIRONMENT, MANAGEMENT SUPPORT, AND EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION AMONG EMPLOYEES OF PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS



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ABSTRACT

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Work stress has been rampant among employees in most organizations. Moreover, work stress could impact employees' work life and organization performance. Unfortunately, employees of the public organization also are not exempted from experiencing work stress. The objectives of this paper are to understand the relationship between work stress toward work environment, management support, and work satisfaction; and also to determine the impact of work stress on work environment, management support, and work satisfaction among employees in the public organizations. Questionnaires were distributed among employees in the public organizations in consideration of the tools by various scholars on work stress, work environment, management support, and employee satisfaction. The paper had a response rate of 75.7% from the participation by those employees. Data analyses were done using SPSS specifically on correlation and regression. Results indicated that work stress had no impact on work environment, management support, and employee satisfaction. On the other hand, work environment had a positive relationship toward management support and employee satisfaction. Meanwhile, management support and employee satisfaction had a positive relationship. Finally, the public organizations' top management could learn that work stress had an impacted on their employees' work environment which subsequently will affect organizations' performance.

Contribution/ Originality: This paper contributes to the body of knowledge of stress where the existence of a relationship of the determinants of stress at workplace. It also proves that variable work environment has a significant relationship with work stress. This study discovered that work environment can be used and supported as a significant relationship with work stress. Moreover, work stress affects the productivity and efficiency level in an organization. Thus, organizations should know that work environment has implications toward employees' work stress. However, the top management should maintain a good supervision and keep a focus on their employee satisfaction.

1. INTRODUCTION

A dynamic change in worldwide nowadays has caused stress happened in many workplaces. Consequently, many types of research that related to work stress had been done by scholars. They had proven that the cost of work-related stress has increased from time to time around the worldwide. Thus, the cost associated with the work-related stress has increased among the industrial countries (Kanisek and Theorell, 1990; Shergold, 1995).

Stress has become common in both developing as well as developed countries (Baskaran, 2004). This problem has become a serious issue nowadays. Employee stress has become a crucial topic due to its impact on employees and society. Employee stress is important because an employee is unlikely to be productive when experiencing stress. Consequences, it will affect organization performance. Moreover, Cranwell-Ward (1998) describes the stress as the physiological and psychological reactions when individuals meet a challenge that beyond their capacity or ability. According to Muchlas (2008) stress is a physical, mental and emotional reaction towards changes. The physical and emotion reaction happens when the works demand beyond their capability and ability. If the worker suffered a high degree of stress in a long period, it will affect their health.

Furthermore, Landsbergis (1988) and Cummins (1990) indicated that high degree of work stress is concerned with the low degree of job satisfaction and also the poor mental health. Kvarnström (2017) indicated that stress can cause a high turnover, absenteeism, and high medical costs. Interestingly, fifty to sixty percent of all lost working days were associated with stress (Cox *et al.*, 2000). Meanwhile, Edwards (2001) reported that many elements and contributing factors are tested by many researchers, for examples: poor relationships with co-workers, the political climate of the organization, role ambiguity, and conflicting performance expectation.

In Malaysia, ergonomic workstation caused the stress happened at the workplace (Makhbul and Idrus, 2009). Consequently, when the workplace was perceived as stress causer, it would bring about many negative effects to the individual as well as the organization. Yasin and Dzulkifli (2011) discovered the relationship between social support and psychological problems among students shown that the higher the social support, then the lower the stress. The relationship between occupational stress and job satisfaction found that high level of physiological stress may lead to lower job satisfaction in the workplace (Ismail *et al.*, 2009). Moreover, the punctuality had been an issue among these employees. They were required not to be late to work not more than 3 times in a month. Thus, disciplinary action will be taken against these employees by their organization due to lateness to work. Interestingly, some employees had the tendency of coming late to work more than 3 times in a month. These situations had caused disruption in the services rendered to the public by the organization.

This paper explores the employees of public organization on their work stress in relation to assessment on work environment, management support, and employee satisfaction. Therefore, the objectives of this paper are to determine the relationship and impact between work stress toward work environment, management support, and employee satisfaction.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Work Stress

There are many different definitions of stress. Stress is the pressure or coercion which received by a person. Arnold *et al.* (1995) expressed that the origin of the word stress is from Latin word “stingere” which means to draw tight. Meanwhile, Hinkle (1973) claims that stress of “stringere”, which means tighten and was used in the seventh century. During that time, it is to describe hardship or mental suffering. According to him, during the late eighteenth century, stress was referring to “pressure or force” towards an individual or to an individual mental power. According to Palmer *et al.* (2003) stress occurs when the perceived pressure exceeds perceived the ability to cope. Schafer (1992) defined stress as mental and physical condition results from a perceived threat that cannot be dealt.

Since excessive stress causes many human service problems, the researcher focus on few determinants of stress that may face by employees at a public organization. According to [Rose et al. \(1994\)](#) high staff stress has been implicated in poor staff performance, and other staff behaviors with negative consequences, such as staff absenteeism ([Hatton and Emerson, 1993](#); [Rose, 1995](#)). Stress commonly happened when the work demands exceed the employee ability to cope ([Lazarus and Folkman, 1984](#)). Consequently, physical, psychological or behavioral negative reactions may occur. In behavioral reactions, workers may have a tendency to consume alcohol, drugs, sexual disorders, eating disorders, increasingly absent from work, late for work, and some even consider quitting their job. Few variables which associated with stress in this research paper are independent variables represented by work environment, management support, and employee satisfaction, whereas dependent variable is stress.

2.2. Work Environment

The work environment is a scene or a physical workstation environment which a group of people works together to achieve the specific goals. It may include many aspects, examples: lighting, work area design, temperature, and etc. ([Sutton and Rafaeli, 1987](#)). A suitable and ideal workplace conditions can help the employee to improve their work effectiveness and efficiency. Unsuitable or poor workplace conditions may cause the employee can't perform well in the workplace for examples noise of surroundings, inadequate lighting, poor air quality, and other ergonomics problems ([Dalbokova and Krzyzanowski, 2002](#)).

Moreover, the work environment was an outcome or goods product of the perception by an organizations employee. It was also considered as characteristic of the organization ([Foss et al., 2013](#)). Studies have tended to the extent to which a person generates ideas depends on the perception of the work environment ([Damanpour, 1991](#); [Axtell et al., 2000](#); [Hornsby et al., 2009](#); [Alpkan et al., 2010](#)). On the other hand, physical work environment consists of several items such as lighting, space or size of working area, the quality of air, the temperature, the layout, and another physical setting in the organization ([Cartwright and Cooper, 1997](#)).

[Hagihara et al. \(1998\)](#) found that working situation or circumstances (example: the size of the working area) can significantly cause the low job satisfaction due to they are working in the smaller room. According to [Vischer \(2007\)](#) workplace stress in relation to the physical work environment is a feeling of comfort or mismatch of the employee working there. Feeling of mismatch by the employees when they find the environment is inappropriate and the employees find difficult to adapt and cope with it. The failure of employees to adapt it is inter-related with their accomplishment of the job.

2.3. Management Support

Management support was the concept mentioned which found at the managerial levels. It's mentioned the most in the literature which including organization, managerial or group-work levels. Many studies proved that management people played an important role to affect the innovative behavior among employees by supporting them to generate new ideas ([Hamel, 1996](#); [Amabile et al., 1996;2004](#); [Elenkov et al., 2005](#); [Damanpour and Schneider, 2006](#)). According to [Oldham and Cummings \(1996\)](#) the employees will show their interest in work and work achievement when their manager is supportive, besides, the employees will take their own initiative at work.

In a study of American child life specialists, [Munn et al. \(1996\)](#) found lack of superior support was the best predictor of intention to quit and job dissatisfaction. [Hatton and Emerson \(1998\)](#) shown that the staff turnover was predicted by low levels of superior support. [Coghlan \(1984\)](#) and, [Kelly and Cross \(1985\)](#) states that one of the stress reduction sources from the support gained from talking with family, friends, and peers.

2.4. Employee Satisfaction

Employee satisfaction can be defined as overall positive effects towards a job that owned by an individual ([Arnold and Feldman, 1986](#)). According to [Locke \(1975\)](#) job satisfaction was the reaction of cognitive, effective and

evaluation towards work. In his study, there were five variables found to affect job satisfaction, namely: work environment, pay, promotion, co-workers, and supervisors. Whereas, Robbins (2000) believed that employees who are satisfied are likely to become a citizen who has a positive attitude towards their life, society as well as organizations. Furthermore, Robbins (2000) defined job satisfaction as an individual or employee attitude towards his or her job. According to Vecchio (2002) job satisfaction was one's thinking and feeling towards work. Azad-marzabadi and Tarkhorani (2007) defined job satisfaction as an emotional state from the evaluation of one's job and in short, it is about employees mind set on their works.

According to Chandraiah *et al.* (2003) various studies have been done which correlate the factors of occupational stress and job satisfaction. These studies proved that the stress suffered by the worker will affect his/her job satisfaction. This means those suffered high level of stress will less satisfied with his/her work.

2.5. Hypothesis Development

According to Dempsey *et al.* (2004) ergonomics is the designing of the job to fit the worker. Whereas the goal of ergonomics can be materialized if the organization can match the work processes with the worker whose perform the tasks. Working environment design from an ergonomics perspective can effectively minimize stress. If working environment did not ergonomically design, workers may face physical stress. Consequently, the workers will have their productivity affected or affect their ability to perform their work properly (Leaman, 1995).

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive and significant relationship between work environment and work stress.

Social support can be described as both a buffer against life stressors as well as promoting wellness and health (Dollete *et al.*, 2004). According to Eskin (2003) Deficits in social support have been shown to be related to many psychological problems such as depressions, anxiety, and stress.

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive and significant relationship between management support and work stress.

High levels of work stress are associated with low levels of job satisfaction. According to Sanchez *et al.* (2004) job stress was the most important predictor of job satisfaction. Work stress can be negatively related to job satisfaction among navy trainees (Fairbrother and Warn, 2003).

Hypothesis 3: There is a positive and significant relationship between employee satisfaction and work stress.

Thus, the research framework is depicted in Figure 1.

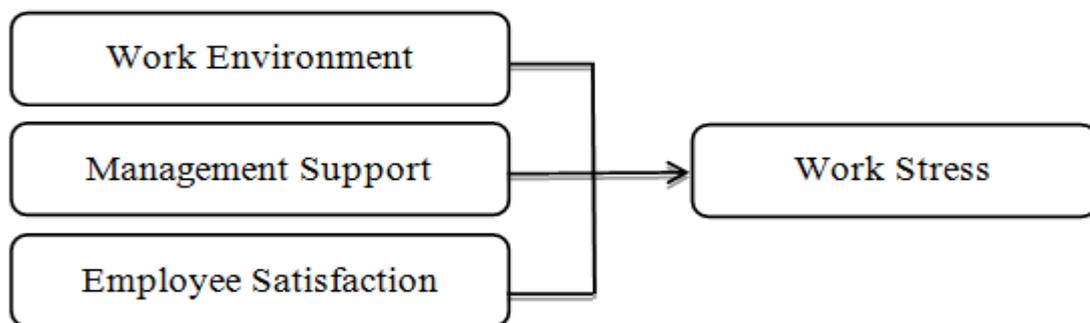


Figure-1. Research Framework

3. METHODOLOGY

The population was employees of five public organizations in a northern state of Malaysia. These employees were the respondents that received a self-administered questionnaire for them to answer pertaining to the work environment, management support and employee satisfaction in relation to their work stress. A total of 136 questionnaires were distributed to employees in those organizations. One hundred and nine questionnaires were

collected and the response rate was 80%. Unfortunately, six respondents did not answer most of the questions and had to be discounted. Thus, the useable questionnaires were 103 and the useable rate was 75.7%.

Moreover, a five-point Likert was applied onto the questionnaires. The questionnaire had adopted questions on work environment (Kessler *et al.*, 2003) management support (Fako, 2010) employee satisfaction (Ma, 2010) and work stress (Doraisamy, 2007). Table 1 is the summary of the tools being used.

Table-1. Cronbach's Alpha of Tools

Item	Source	Items	α
Work <input type="checkbox"/> tress	Doraisamy (2007)	7	0.91
Work Environment	Kessler <i>et al.</i> (2003)	7	0.90
Management Support	Fako (2010)	7	0.91
Employee Satisfaction	Ma (2010)	7	0.88

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1. Reliability Analysis

Based on the questionnaires being adapted and adopted for this paper, the reliability analysis revealed that the questions used in the questionnaire had more than 0.70 in the Cronbach's Alpha in terms of goodness of measure. As such, work environment constructs with 7 items had $\alpha=0.83$, management support construct with 7 items had $\alpha=0.90$, and employee satisfaction construct with 7 items had $\alpha=0.83$. Meanwhile, work stress construct with 7 items had $\alpha=0.88$.

4.2. Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis was conducted on work environment, management support, employee satisfaction, and work stress as depicted in Table 2. The value was based on mean score interpretation of Likert scale as below:

Mean Score	Tendency Level
5.01 to 7.00	High
30.1 to 5.00	Moderate
1.00 to 3.00	Low

Firstly, it was found that employee satisfaction had reached the highest mean value of 3.85 (SD=0.55) with a moderate tendency level. This had indicated that most respondents concern or agree on their employee satisfaction. Secondly, work environment had the mean score of 3.73 (SD=0.62) with a moderate tendency level. This had indicated that the respondents also concern or agree on the work environment. Thirdly, management support had the mean score of 3.68 (SD=0.68) with a moderate tendency level. This had indicated that the respondents also concern or agree on the work environment. On the other hand, work stress had the mean score of 2.42 (SD=0.72) with a low tendency level. This had indicated that public employees disagree on the work stress at their work place.

Table-2. Descriptive Analysis

Variable	Mean	SD	Tendency Level
Work Environment	3.73	0.62	Moderate
Management Support	3.68	0.68	Moderate
Employee Satisfaction	3.85	0.55	Moderate
Work Stress	2.42	0.72	Low

4.3. Demographic Analysis

Table 3 elaborates the demographic of the respondents. They were inquired on their gender, marital status, age, ethnic, academic qualification, working experience, and work department.

Interestingly, more than two-third of the employees in the public organizations were female (n=64, 62.14%). Whereby, male employees were 39 (37.86%). Majority of the employees were married (n=80, 77.67%) and single employees were 22 (21.36%). Age breakdown, the majority were in the range of 30 to 39 years old (n=45, 43.69%). This was followed by age group of 20 to 29 with 21 employees (20.39%), more than 49 years old with 19 employees (18.45%), and 40 to 49 with 18 employees (17.48%).

Due to the nation's ethnicity, almost all employees in the public organizations were Malays (n=101, 98.06%) and Indians were 2 employees (1.94%). Unfortunately, there were no Chinese employees being employed which are the second majority of the ethnic group in the nation.

Academically, the highest academic qualification was 3 employees (2.91%) holding Masters. This was followed by Degree holders of 14 employees (13.59%), Diploma holders of 13 employees (12.62%), and STPM holders of 4 employees (3.88%). Majority of the employees were having SPM qualification with a number of 65 employees (63.11%). Moreover, the majority of the employees were categorized as clerks or administrative assistants at the public organizations.

In terms of working experience, the majority of the employees had between 6 to 10 years with 34 employees (33.01%). This was followed by 23 employees (22.33%) with more than 20 years, 1 to 5 years of working experience were 20 employees (19.42%), 11 to 15 years of experience were 14 employees (13.59%), and 16 to 20 years were 12 employees (11.65%). Subsequently, these public employees were asked on their working department. Majority of them were in the administration department with a total of 57 employees (55.34%). This was followed by 30 employees (29.13%) who were categorized under others (i.e. logistics etc.), 11 employees (10.68%) were in Finance department, 2 employees (1.94%) were in Marketing department, and 2 employees (1.94%) were in Human Resource department. Finally, one employee (0.97%) was in the Production department.

Table-3. Demographic Information

Demographic	Item	n	%
Gender	Male	39	37.86
	Female	64	62.14
Marital Status	Single	22	21.36
	Married	80	77.67
	Others	1	0.97
Age (years old)	20 to 29	21	20.39
	30 to 39	45	43.69
	40 to 49	18	17.48
	More than 49	19	18.45
Ethnic	Malays	101	98.06
	Indians	2	1.94
Academic Qualification	SPM	65	63.11
	STPM	4	3.88
	Diploma	13	12.62
	Degree	14	13.59
	Master	3	2.91
	Others	4	3.88
Working Experience (years)	1 to 5	20	19.42
	6 to 10	34	33.01
	11 to 15	14	13.59
	16 to 20	12	11.65
	More than 20	23	22.33
Department	Marketing	2	1.94
	Finance	11	10.68
	Administration	57	55.34
	Human Resource	2	1.94
	Production	1	0.97
	Others	30	29.13

4.4. Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was conducted between work environment, management support, employee satisfaction, and work stress as depicted in Table 4. The analysis had shown a negative relationship between work stress toward work environment ($t=-0.38$, $p<0.01$), management support ($t=-0.34$, $p<0.01$), and employee satisfaction ($t=-0.31$, $p<0.01$). On the other hand, work environment had a positive relationship toward management support ($t=0.68$, $p<0.01$) and employee satisfaction ($t=0.49$, $p<0.01$). There was also a positive relationship between management support toward employee satisfaction ($t=0.48$, $p<0.01$).

Table-4. Correlation Analysis

	Variable	1	2	3	4
1	Work Environment	1			
2	Management Support	0.68**	1		
3	Employee Satisfaction	0.49**	0.48**	1	
4	Work Stress	-0.38**	-0.34**	-0.31**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

4.5. Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted between work environment, management support, and employee satisfaction toward work stress as depicted in Table 5. This was to determine whether the hypotheses either to be accepted or rejected. Public employees had the R^2 value showed 17% for the dependent variable of work stress which was explained by leadership. This means that 83% of the variance in the work environment, management support, and employee satisfaction was explained by other unknown additional variables that have not been explored. The multiple regression models ($F=6.80$, $p<0.00$) was proven to be a significant model due to the F ratio being significant in predicting work environment, management support, and employee satisfaction. Overall, the F ratio result presented that the combination of leadership was a good fit in predicting work environment, management support, and employee satisfaction. The accepted sub-hypotheses were work environment ($\beta=-0.25$, $p<0.10$). Unfortunately, management support ($\beta=-0.10$, $p<0.43$) and employee satisfaction ($\beta=-0.13$, $p<0.22$) were rejected.

Therefore, hypotheses H_1 was accepted in explaining public employees impact of work stress components on the work environment. Whereby, sub-hypotheses H_2 and H_3 were rejected in explaining public employees' impact of work stress components on management support and employee satisfaction.

Table-5. Multiple Regression Analysis

Work Stress	β	Sig.
Work environment	-0.249	0.057
Management support	-0.101	0.432
Employee satisfaction	-0.134	0.217
R	0.41	
R^2	0.17	
F -Change	6.80	
Sig.	0.00	

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. The Relationship between Work Environment and Work Stress

Public employees concurred that there was an impact on work environment and work stress. This is in line with the Makhbul and Idrus (2009) that work stress research which proved that ergonomic workstation causes the stress happened at the workplace. According to Bhagat (1983) the external stressors can impair the work performance seriously and one of the external stressors is the physical environment, such as overcrowding, poor

lighting, excessive noise, extreme temperature and so on. Saodah (2003) expressed that work environment leads to burnout.

5.2. The Relationship between Management Support and Work Stress

Public employees denied that management support had an impact on work stress. Interestingly, the finding is contradicted by the findings of Yasin and Dzulkifli (2011) on the relationship between social support and psychological problems among students which shown that the higher the social support, then the lower is the stress. Moreover, this finding implies that management support does not contribute to work stress among the employees at the public organization.

5.3. The Relationship between Employee Satisfaction and Work Stress

Public employees rejected that employee satisfaction had an impact on work stress. This finding is contradicted with Ismail *et al.* (2009) on the relationship between occupational stress and job satisfaction which shown that high level of physiological stress may lead to lower job satisfaction in the workplace.

6. CONCLUSION

The overall findings of the analysis show that there was a relationship between work environment and work stress, whereas management support and employee satisfaction have no relationship with work stress. This concludes that work environment influences public employee work stress in the public organization. On the other hand, management support and employee satisfaction did not influence public employees' work stress in public organization.

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