

Job Stress Level as Perceived by Staffs in the Government Sector Case Study: MARA Kuching, Sarawak

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Abstract-Stress is a reaction to excessive pressure or harassment at work. It is a physical, mental, or emotional response to events that cause bodily or mental tension. People in stress conditions may find it is hard to concentrate on any task and cannot be relied on to do their share. Some employers assume that stressful working conditions turns up the pressure on workers. A set aside health concerns; it will affect the productivity and profitability in today's economy. This paper purposely to identify the level of job stress among government staffs. This study was carried out using a set of questionnaire and survey method. The questionnaire was distributed to 150 staffs of Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) Kuching as representative of government sector and was analysed using SPSS version 19. The study had shown that most of the respondents were moderately stressful. It is very important that the organisations understands the needs of its employees and provide what is best for the employees.

General Terms- Stress, Job Performance

Keywords- Job Stress; Government sector; Level of stress

1. INTRODUCTION

Stress in our daily lives comes in all shapes and sizes. Different people deal with different level of stress with different situation. Sometimes it is just like a motivation for us in order to get a job done. Sometimes it also can be damaging. Many people think that they understand stress. In reality, it is complex and misunderstood. For many professions, of course competing demand and pressures unable to be avoided. For all workers experience stress. The volume of work also can be overwhelming at times. No matter what professions such as social workers, doctors, managers or even teachers, they know that stress can be very serious consequences especially when it unable to be controlled or handled. According to Selye [1], work stress is a poor working condition and this will create a stressful work atmosphere. A little stress at work is good as it can enhance productive work performance. However, if it becomes excessive, it will create stress towards a person. The symptoms of stress includes anxiety (cook up), aggressiveness (immediate change of mood swing), loss of appetite (sometimes people do not eat and sometimes eat a lot), alcohol abuse (it is a quick fixed solutions), depression (solitude, aloof), excessive worries (too much worry, become a worrier), easily irritated (not

normal self), fatigue (easily get tired), lack of concentration and motivation (under estimate ourselves), restlessness (no calmness) and sleep disturbances (not enough sleep, insomnia) (Cranny, Smith and Stone, 1992). A report obtained in 1999, by National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) stated that nature of work is changing at whirlwind speed. A job stress poses a threat to the workers' health. According to Nilufar Ahsan *et al.* [2], an unhealthy job stress among the people responsible in an assisting, the future generation's education will ultimately affect their intellectual and social abilities. Failure of an educational institutions in providing a healthy working environment or even a working environment with the minimal level, possible to unhealthy job stress that lead to many problems in the near future, especially in the employees' work performance in teaching students and part of the university administrative. At the end of the day, both employer and employees are responsible when it comes to the issue of handling stress. Stress generates anxiety, tension, irritability and in the worst cases, depression that in may lead to violence. Stress at work effects everybody. But due to the occupational segregation, women often find themselves in jobs where there is a heavy workload combined with little

decision making autonomy and participation compared to men [3]. Maybe women are having this kind of situation due to the concentration need to be taken at workplace as well as at home where their family need to be concentrated to at the same time. Staffs in government sector for instance, demand a need for multi skills to interact with different kind of clients or customers, positive personality and attitude, high level of patience in solving a variety of problems faced. Thus, they can become unmanageable and can cause high levels of negative stress. When these become excessive, they can seriously affect staffs' health. Learning process also be affected with staffs not being able to perform their best potentials in their own job tasks. Therefore, job satisfaction towards the profession may not be fulfilled. This scenario may have a great impact on staffs themselves, clients or customers as well as the organization. Job performance is the result of three factors working together: skill, effort and the nature of work conditions. Skills include knowledge, abilities and competencies the employee brings to the job. Effort is the degree of motivation the employee puts forth toward getting the job done; and the nature of work conditions is the degree of accommodation of these conditions in facilitating the employee's productivity [4]. But if government sector staffs faces stress in their daily work, this will affect their job performance. Skill, knowledge, abilities and competencies will turn down due to the demand a need for multi skills from top management of the organization. Decreasing job performance level will definitely harm the staffs, organization and clients or customers as well. If the job performance can't be reached, the job satisfaction will not be fulfilled.

2. ISSUES

Stress arises when individuals perceive that they cannot adequately cope with the demands being made on them or with threats to their well-being [5]. Lambert and Paoline [6] observed that stress in corrections leads to "hypertension, heart attacks, and other stress-related illnesses that can ultimately affect the life expectancy of the employee," and has been "linked to divorce, substance abuse and suicide among correctional staff". This will affect the work performance that has been identified as the significant key for organizations to gain competitive advantage and superior productivity. In human services, professional staff may have many opportunities in intense to involvement with other people. This interaction would have chances to charge with feeling of anger, embarrassment, and fear or despair [7]. As for the organization, the impacts will caused of absenteeism, higher medical costs and staff turnover, recruiting and training new workers and reduced productivity and efficiency of staff. As a result, it will lead to losses of good workers for the organization due to the stress problems [6]. As for the society, it includes clients or customers and everybody outside the organization. Due to the job stress among staffs, it will bring to the inability to

meet the demand for the level of multi skills that had been set for them. Thus, it will influence the performance of the staffs in giving service to public, giving information will be low, and it will not meet the expectation of clients or customers. Recent studies of so-called a healthy organization is one with low rates of illness, injury, and disability in its workforce competitive in the marketplace. Studies show that stressful working conditions are actually associated with increased absenteeism, tardiness, and intentions by workers to quit their jobs-all of which has a negative effect. From this research, it is a finding to find out whether stress exists among staffs at government sector. Therefore the it is important as it can enhance the productivity of work performance.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Method

The method of research in this study was carried out using a set of questionnaire and a survey method with the intention to determine the job stress as perceived by staffs of government sector'. The survey method was the most appropriate way to collect data from the samples so that generalization from the findings can represent the population of MARA staffs. The questionnaire was distributed to 150 staffs of Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) that consists of Pejabat MARA Negeri Sarawak, Pejabat MARA Daerah Kuching, Maktab Rendah Sains MARA (MRSM) Kuching and Institut Kemahiran MARA (IKM) Kuching. The questionnaire was used in this survey consists of items of which some are self-design and some are modified from existing questionnaire. The finding were analysed by using the cross tabulation statistical method. To identify the staffs' stress level, the 22 items that represent the four domains was analysed with five point Likert type scale. The respondents were required to give their ratings by putting a tick in the appropriate boxes that may suit their perception of statements based on the rating scale. The total 22 items in this section measures level of stress and ranks the stress factors experienced by staffs. The scores of levels of stress are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Scores of levels

Scales	Sum of Scores	Levels of Stress
1	22	Not stressful
2	23 – 44	Mildly stressful
3	45 – 66	Moderately Stressful
4	67 – 88	Very stressful
5	89 – 110	Extremely stressful

3.2 Research Design

The summed scores range from the lowest score of 22 to the highest score of 110. If the respondent indicated that the MARA staffs that he or she is not stressful to all the items, the total score is 22. This indicates that the MARA

staffs are not experiencing stress at all. However, if the total score ranges from 89 – 110, MARA staff is indicating that he or she is experiencing extremely stressful level.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

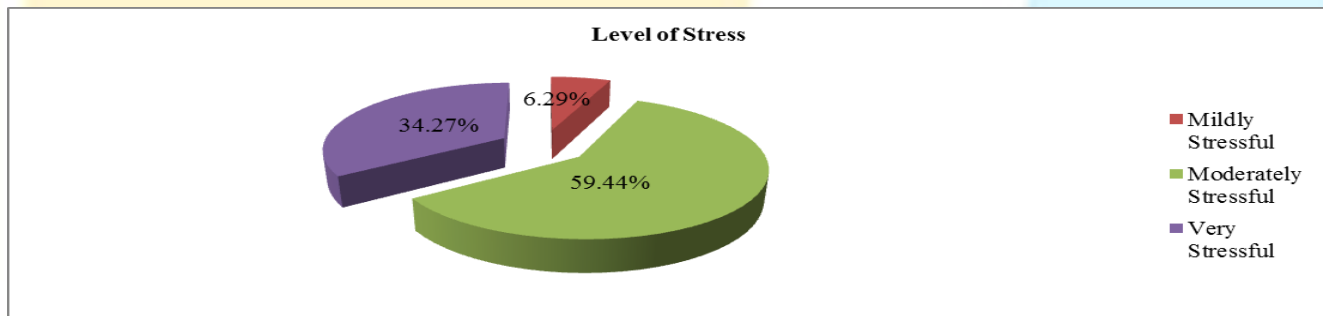
The Table 2 and the chart are shown the MARA staffs level of job stress as perceived by staffs of Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) Kuching. It shows that most of the respondents were moderately stressful with the total percentage of 59.44% with the frequency of 85 respondents. Meanwhile, the finding also shows that 34.27% with the frequency of 49 respondents were very stressful. Those that were mildly stressful contribute to the remaining 6.29% with the nine respondents. The other level of stress such as not stressful and extremely stressful did not have any respondents. Even though the result for level of job stress is moderate (59.44%), it still in a serious category whereby the second highest percentage level of job stress is very stressful with 34.27%. However, if it

can't be handled and controlled in the level of moderately stressful, this can contribute to the level of very stressful.

Table 2: MARA Staffs Level of Job Stress

Sum of Scores	Levels of Stress	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
22	Not stressful	0	0
23 – 44	Mildly stressful	9	6.29
45 – 66	Moderately Stressful	85	59.44
67 – 88	Very Stressful	49	34.27
89 - 110	Extremely Stressful	0	0
Total		143	100

Fig 1: The chart of MARA Staffs Level of Job Stress



Those that were mildly stressful contribute to the remaining 6.29% which is they might be involve in the multi-tasking. Respondents also mentioned that they prefer specialization of work. They want to avoid multi skills and multi-tasking. Not all staffs can perform multi skills. They really need an efficiency, innovation, dedication and high confident level in order to give good multi skills performance to organization [8].

5. DISCUSSION

Government staffs should understand and realize that stress is part of life and exist in any profession. Therefore, they should be more positive and optimistic in doing their best and coping in the profession. A better understanding in the nature of stress can enhance better performance and bring the best potential of an individual [9]. Activities like team building and motivation course are able to build staffs' confidence level as well as can refresh their mind in order to enhance their performance in working environment. Those activities are able to motivate staff to work harder and have better work performance. This also can help staffs to cope with job stress. The organization really needs their staffs to become multi skills staffs, as they want to right sizing the department. Organization or top management must have

an initiative to train their staffs to be multi skills rather than just easily demand staffs to become multi skills. The government sector can come out with special programmes in order to train their staffs. Even though level of stress in the research findings for this study is moderately stressful, but the next higher percentage of level of job stress is very stressful. In other words to say, they still need to be very aware with the staffs' stress level. Whenever staffs feel stress, just take a deep breath in order to neutralize the burden or job stress. Find quiet place or listen to the slow music. Close your eyes. It helps you to focus in ward and rest your mind. Take a deep breath. In this kind of situation, it can help your brain and mind to completely relaxed and calm. Talk to a friend or someone. It can help staffs to reduce or manage stress at the workplace. It does not matter to talk about problems faced or any other topic. By talking to someone, it is just like informal consultation. A conversation with friends or colleagues is one of the steps to control your stress.

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