

Stress and psychological well being in UK and Malaysian firefighters

Abstract

Purpose

– The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship among sources of stress, coping strategy, job satisfaction and psychological well-being and to examine the roles of coping behaviour as the moderator variable.

Design/methodology/approach

– The study uses a questionnaire survey and area sampling design, with responses of 617 Malaysian fire fighters and 436 UK fire fighters. The questionnaire comprises: the Sources of Occupational Stress in Fire Fighters & Paramedics scale, the Coping Response of Rescue Workers and the Job Satisfaction Scale. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis is used to examine the moderating effect of coping behaviour on job satisfaction and psychological well-being.

Findings

– It is found that the sources of occupational stress have significant negative correlations with job satisfaction and psychological well-being. The results of the regression analysis indicates that overall coping behaviour has a significant influence on overall job satisfaction for UK fire fighters but not for Malaysian fire fighters. However, overall coping behaviour has a significant effect as a moderating variable between sources of stress and psychological health for Malaysian fire fighters.

Practical implications

– The results suggest that training that focuses on psychological aspects (stress management, coping strategies, etc.), and the use of counsellors should be highlighted. It is suggested that the Malaysian Fire Brigade should establish a Counselling Unit, to deal with psychological problems faced by the fire fighters.

Originality/value

– This study shows how theories originating in developed countries (USA and Canada) can help explain the psychological health of the fire fighters in a developing country (Malaysia). The analysis of statistical results led to the development of a model to interpret the factors influencing psychological health in Malaysian and UK fire fighters. Beside that, the evidence from the study also highlighted that factors such as culture may influence the ways employees cope up with the situations.