

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK
ENVIRONMENT, WORK LIFE BALANCE AND
JOB STRESS: A STUDY IN LHDNM SABAH**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis materials are based on my original work, excepts for quotations, citations, excerpts and references which had been duly acknowledge.

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ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK ENVIRONMENT, WORK LIFE BALANCE AND JOB STRESS: A STUDY IN LHDNM SABAH

This study was undertaken to understand the relationship between work environment and job stress and the mediating effect of work life balance among LHDNM officers in Sabah. The independent variables are demand, management support, peer support, control, relationship, role and change. While dependent variable was job stress. Work life balance was mediator in this study. This study use probability sampling technique. The data was analyzed using several statistical analysis including factor analysis, reliability analysis, and multiple regression. Control, management support, relationships and change have significant influence on job stress. Peer Support, relationship and change were found to have significant effects on work life balance. Work life balance mediates the relationship between dimension of relationships and job stress. Role score the highest mean in the job stress. The findings of the study to provide better knowledge and understanding regarding job stress in the organization and proper action to be taken to overcome the situation.



ABSTRAK

Kajian ini dilakukan untuk memahami hubungan diantara persekitaran kerja dan tekanan kerja serta perhubungan diantara keseimbangan kerja dan kehidupan dikalangan pegawai LHDNM di Sabah. Faktor faktor termasuk didalam kajian adalah tuntutan kerja, sokongan, kawalan, perhubungan, tanggungjawab dan perubahan. Keseimbangan kerja dan kehidupan adalah faktor perhubungan diantara faktor persekitaran kerja dan tekanan kerja. Kajian ini menggunakan teknik pensampelan mudah. Data dianalisa menggunakan beberapa kaedah nalisis statistik termasuk analisa factor, analaisa kebolehppercayaan, dan regresi berganda. Kawalan , sokongan pengurusan, perhubungan dan perubahan mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dean tekanan kerja. Sokongan rakan sekerja, perhubungan dan perubahan didapati memunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan keseimbangan kerja dan kehidupan. Keseimbangan kerja dan kehidupan mempunyai pengaruh terhadap perhubungan diantara faktor perhubungan dan tekanan kerja . Tanggungjawab didapati mempunyai keputusan yang paling tinggi terhadap tekanan kerja. Hasil kajian ini memberikan maklumat dan pengetahuan yang lebih luas terhadap tekanan kerja kepada pihak pengurusan dan organisasi didalam merangka tindakan untuk penyelesaian yang berterusan.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Due to rapid changes and advances in information and technology was accelerated trade and competition. This has resulted in increasing demand for higher productivity and greater accountability in the public sector (Peter Stebbins et al. 2007). Peter Stebbins et al. (2007) also view that current workplace environments have been increasingly characterized by increased pressure on employees to perform their duties at constantly higher levels, with longer working hours, limited staff numbers, insecure employment shapes and employer empowerment. All these aspects have been recognized as some of the factors that causal to the creation of a stressful work environment and increased risk of psychological problems to the employees.

Much evidence has linked the impact of the stress in the workplace with a range of negative physical, psychological and social consequences for employees. Its included depression, anxiety, burnout, increased alcohol use, smoking, aggression, anger, violence, road rage, poor family interactions, declining marital cohesion (Peter Stebbins et al. 2007). Workplace stress has also been link to high staff turnover and absenteeism, increased industrial accidents and insurance premiums, decreased job performance, loss of productivity and lowered morale (De Bruin and Taylor, 2006)

Work life balance also has become the important in the public and private organization including in Malaysia. Work life balance covered wide disciplines in the organizations, ranging from psychology to sociology and from management of human capital to organizational behaviour. Therefore the reason of the interest in this area of study is due to the perception that nearly everyone has a problem of work life balance (Erdem R.,Karakose T.(2008). Darcy et al. (2012) also support that work life balance becomes important element in human resources management and organization behaviour.



The popularity of worklife balance study and research was proved as at the 2005 conference of Gender, Work and Organization, reported Gregory and Milner (2009). They had gathered more than double the projected number of paper proposals for a stream under that title. The presentations and discussions in the 2005 conference proved the vitality of research in this area, as well as the extent of methodological approaches. Its included qualitative and quantitative, comparative and single-country case studies, sectorial and organizational studies, individual and organizational perspectives.

Fahlen (2012) argue that, the models of worklife balance/work family balance and work-family conflict were rarely defined or mainstream. Other authors argue that, Work life balance is often used as something self-evident, or connection to guidelines aimed at integration work and family life (Frone, 2003; Guest 2002). Therefore, Frone (2003) generally define of work life balance is an absence of interference, or conflict between work and non-work life. Other author, Cascio (2000) describe work life balance as employer supported benefit or working environments that help employees balance work and non-work demands.

Lockwood (2003) discuss regarding the term of work/life balance in term of juggling competing demand when tiring if not stressful and cause lower productivity, sickness and absenteeism. Therefore work/life balance is matter for all employees and all organizations. Further, work family conflict as part of the work life balance was discussed as the push and pull between work and family responsibilities. The influence of the work family conflict as Allen et al. (2000) found that work related stress as one of the outcome of the work family conflict.

As the current nature of work is shifting at high rapidity and chasing employees in making the job done. The National Institute for Safety and Health, U.K (1999) found that job stress was poses a threat to the health of workers and in turn to the health of organization. They defined job stress as the harmful physical and emotional response that occur when the requirement of the job do not match the capabilities, resources or need of the workers. Further, they also identified worker characteristic and working environments as main source of job stress. It's including

heavy work load, long work hours, deficiency of support from colleagues and managers and management style in the organizations.

1.2 Research Background

There has been much research on occupational stress due to work environment among the employees in private and public organizations. The occupational stress terminology is used commonly with work stress and/or job stress but its meaning refers to the same thing as mention by Larson (2004). Job stress has been an significant idea in the study of employees' reactions to their work environments. There are numerous challenges in the work environment such as stiff competition, greater than before in work goals, fears of losing the job, rapid organizational change, limited of time, deficiency of space, constantly increased in technological development and differing demand from organizational stakeholders (McHugh, 1997). Other factors such as increased use of participation management and computerization as mention by Myers (2000) and greater uncertainty and others have resulted in higher work stress to the employees. Dollard and Walsh (1999) discovered other potential factors causal the stated trend of greater stress in the public sector and provided a variety of justifications. It's included that public sector workers may be mainly affected by organizational changes, such as downsizing.

The study regarding work life balance also reveals that there are many implication of the work life imbalance to the job stress. Some of the authors such as Kofodimos (1993) found that imbalance particularly work imbalance will effect high levels of stress to the employees, detracts them from quality of life, and ultimately reduces individual's effectiveness at work. Some of the authors were arguing the concepts of the work life balance used. Greenhaus et al.(2003) argue that, the term "work-life balance" is widely used in the press, in public discussion, and by organizations was attempting to be "family friendly". For many authors, the term refers to a harmonious interface and interaction between different life spheres as argue by Frone (2003).

Work life Balance has always been a concern of those interested in the quality of working life and its relation to broader quality of life as argue by Guest (2002).

Broers (2005) believed that balancing a successful career with a personal or family life can be challenging and impact on a person's satisfaction in their work and personal life's roles. Other author, Ford and Collision's (2011) study of United Kingdom public sector managers, found that in contemporary work life balance debates tensions arising from conflicting demands. Pressures and anxieties were not given sufficient consideration.

J.L Wang (2006) concluded that work stress and imbalance between work and family/personal lives may be part of the etiology of mood and anxiety disorders and propose that studies are needed to delineate the causal relationships among work stress, imbalance between work and family/personal lives and mental disorders. The consequences of work-life imbalance can be dire in terms of the profitability of organizations. Francis and Lingard (2004) found that high levels of work-life balance stress can significantly increase levels of absenteeism and turnover, and substantially decrease employees' levels of job satisfaction, job performance and commitment to the organization.

1.3 Problem Statement

Employee in Malaysia reported to be suffering from job stress in public and private sector because of many factors such as work environment and work life imbalance. Malaysian public academics reported increasing in stress due to rapid development in the Malaysian tertiary education sector such as Idris (2009) and Nilufar et al. (2009). Other sector reported facing the same problem such as multinational production operators study by Zafir et. al.(2008). Job stress in the job function position such as faced by managers by Manshur et al.(2003). Wai et al (2006) on job stress among bank employees. Nasurdin et al (2006) job stress among school teachers. A study on job stress among nurses in hospitals by Kamal et al.(2004). A study on job stress among navy personnel in Malaysia by Mohd Bokti and Abu Talib (2009). Aniza et al. (2010), study a job stress among laboratory technician.

Work-life balance also is a major concern in the workplace today. As evidenced by a numbers of websites, news, and blogs discuss to the subject.

Organizations also under pressure to find solutions to this growing employee demand especially in overcome the impact of job stress and demand of the work life balance initiatives; they also find themselves struggling to achieve their own state of balance between organizational productivity and employee well-being.

The Malaysian Times (2013) reported that about 63 per cent of Malaysian workers have not been spending enough time with their family due to long working hours, according to a survey by Jobstreet.com. The survey was participating by 954 employees across various industries in Malaysia. They found that work-life balance was effectively managing between work and other activities that are important to the workers as stress; burnout and absenteeism could drain productivity and performance of the company. Further findings state that about 60 per cent indicated company does not carry out any initiatives to promote work-life balance.

The Malaysian Times (2014) reported that survey by Randstad Work Monitor found that more than nine in ten (95 percent) employees in Malaysia believe that striking a good work-life balance is the number one priority to achieve a healthy lifestyle. The findings also highlight the increasing importance Malaysian employees place on work-life balance, and the recognition that a lack of it can have a negative impact on their health and productivity at work such as physical and mental health implications included weight gain, depression and burnout. The Malay Mail (2014) reported that RM 100,000 cost to employers daily because of absenteeism that cause by stiff working conditions, inadequate work life balance and lack of opportunities to interact with family and friends.

From the literature shown that the job stress effect to the work life imbalance and work life conflict among employee in Malaysia in public and private sectors particularly in working environment. The purpose of this paper to study the relationships between work environment with work life balance and job stress . The study to examine whether Lembaga Hasil Dalam Negeri Malaysia Sabah employee have similar experience with working environment that influence the work life balance and relationship to the job stress. Therefore this study was to provide a greater understanding of the work-life balance experiences of LHDNM employees particularly at the working environment factors will be investigated.

1.4 Research Questions

The questions of the present study are:

- a. Is there any relationship between work environment and Job Stress?
- b. Is there any relationship between work environment and Work Life Balance?
- c. Is there any relationship between Work Life Balance and Job Stress?
- d. Does Work Life Balance mediate the relationship between work environment i.e demand, control, management support, peer support, relationship, role and change with Job Stress

1.5 Research Objectives

The objectives of the present study are

- a. To determine the relationship between work environment and job stress among the employees of Lembaga Hasil Dalam Negeri Malaysia Sabah
- b. To determine the relationship between work environment and work life balance among the employees of Lembaga Hasil Dalam Negeri Malaysia Sabah
- c. To determine the relationship between Work Life Balance and Job Stress among the employees of Lembaga Hasil Dalam Negeri Malaysia Sabah
- d. To determine the mediation relationship of Work Life Balance with work environment i.e demand, control, management support, peer support, relationship, role and change and Job Stress.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study aims to provide greater understanding of the relationship between work environment and job stress experience among Lembaga Hasil Dalam Negeri Malaysia Sabah employee. In particular the relationship between demand, control, management support, peer support, relationship role and change with the job stress and work life balance. Further the study aim to examine the relationship between work life balance and job stress outcome to the employees.

This study will apply the Management Standard introduced by UK' Health and Safety Executive (HSE) that called the Management Standard. The indicator tool comprised of seven stressor areas namely demands, control, management support, peer support, relationships, role and organization change.

1.7 Significant of the Study

From the past literature shown that the importance of the balancing between work and family to the employee and also to the organization as work life balance will influence employee commitment, increase their productivity, reduce organization turnover (Lockwood, 2003). The past literature also has shown the job stress implication to the employee because of the work life imbalance and work life conflict among public and private sectors employee in Malaysia in.

Therefore the significant of this paper to study the relationships particularly focusing on two dimension work environment included demands, control, support, relationships, role and organization change with work life balance and job stress to provide a greater understanding of the work-life balance experiences of LHDNM employees. This study aims to contribute the knowledge through its findings to provide the understanding on the work life balance dimension as state above to improve employee and organization performance particularly to the Lembaga Hasil Dalam Negeri Malaysia Sabah.

1.8 Key Variables Definitions

1.8.1 Job Stress

Job stress is defined as the harmful psychological and physiological response which occur when there is a chronic imbalance between workplace requirements, environments and worker perceptions of their abilities, coping capacities and needs (De Bruin & Taylor, 2006)

1.8.2 Work Environments

(a) Demands

Demands is define base on Cousins et al.(2004) that is worker interaction with workload, work patterns and work environment at the work place.

(b) Control

Control is define base on Cousins et al.(2004) that involves how much influence workers have and on how they perform their duties, including aspects such as their work pace.

(c) Management Support

Management support is define base on Cousins et al.(2004) that refers to the amount of adequate encouragement, feedback and resources provided to the worker by their management

(d) Peer Support

Peer Support is define base on Cousins et al.(2004) that refers to the amount of adequate encouragement, feedback and resources provided to the worker by their colleagues.

(e) Relationships

Relationships is define base on Cousins et al.(2004) that is the interactions of workers with colleagues, subordinates and superiors, and includes issues of bullying and workplace violence.

(f) Role

Role is define base on Cousins et al.(2004) that relates to whether workers understand their role within their organization and is associated with role ambiguity and role conflict. Role ambiguity was refers to unclear or constantly changing specifications regarding expectations and duties defining an individual's job, while role conflict refers to incompatible demands on a worker (Cousins et al., 2004)

(g) Change

Change is define base on Cousins et al.(2004) that is how organizational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organization.

1.8.3 Work Life Balance

Greenhaus, Collins and Shaw (2003) define work-life balance as the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in and equally satisfied with his or her work role and family role. Thus, employees who experience high work-life balance are those who exhibit similar investment of time and commitment, to work and non-work domains.

1.9 Summary and Organizations of Remaining Chapters

Chapter One - Introduction

In chapter one, the research background includes the discussion regarding problem statement, research questions, research objectives and scope of the study. It's also included the discussion of the significant of the study and key definitions used in this study.

Chapter Two- Literature Review

This chapter will discuss the theories regarding the job stress as Dependent Variable, working environment as Independent Variables and work life balance as Mediator Variable. The chapter also discuss the conceptualization and operational of work place stress and empirical findings for all research variables in that use in this study.

Chapter Three- Research Framework and Methodology

This chapter will discuss the theoretical research framework and research hypotheses. The chapter also discusses the research design, sampling design and instrument design. Then, the chapter will discuss regarding the measurement of variables and data collection method. There also the discussion of the data analysis techniques that will be used in this study.

Chapter Four- Data Analysis and Findings

This chapter will provide detailed results of the statistical analysis including profile of the respondent, factor analysis of the variables used, reliability analysis, descriptive

analysis, correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis and hierarchical regression analysis that were carried out to test the hypotheses of the study.

Chapter Five- Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter, the findings and the analysis will discuss base on the result from chapter 4 including limitation of the study, the conclusion and the suggestions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the important theories, conceptualization, operationalization and empirical evidences of all the variables used in this study based on the review of past literatures. Base on the findings and recommendations by previous study in the relevant areas, the variables are linked and the final research framework is then proposed.

2.2 Job Stress

In the organizational context, Abu Al Rub (2004) discussed the term job stress is used commonly with work stress and occupational stress and also in study by Ismail et al. (2010). Job stress is regularly viewed as employees' psychological and physiological responses toward uncomfortable and undesirable threats happening in the workplace as argue by Montgomery et al.(1996).

Malaysian Psychiatric Association (2009) defined occupational stress, as the responsiveness of not being able to cope with the demands of one's work environment with an associated negative emotional reaction. Other author such as Jamal (1990) discussed that work-related stress may be a result of an employee's being encountered with conflicting job requirements and demands. Likewise, Parker and DeCotis (1983) indicated that work related stress can also happen when individuals are faced with too much work that they can carry out.

Montgomery et al. (1996) further defined work-related stress as a feeling of dissatisfaction as a result of differences between perceived circumstances and accomplishments in the area of work, and the basic human physiological responses to the real life circumstances in the work place which they find uncomfortable, undesirable and threatening. Meanwhile Johnson et al. (2005) argue that job stress be subject to the amount of stress a person experiences at work is likely to be a result of the dealings with a number of factors such as the type of work that they are doing in their profession, the presence of work stressors, the amount of support



they receive both at work and at home and the coping instrument that they use to deal with stress

Hart and Cooper (2001) concluded that, researchers and academics have not yet reached a agreement on the definition of workplace stress. Therefore a logical starting point in the study of workplace stress is to deliver a clear, accurate definition of the concept of workplace stress. Therefore, from the result of the theories and approaches to the concept of job stress, extensive aspects of the stress process, such as personality, work environment and physiology, and at a micro level, focusing on specific factors of stress, such as work demands was wide study options to researcher to explore.

2.3 Theory of Job Stress

There are many job stress model had been develop and explore by the previous study and researchers. The Beehr and Newman's Model (1978) was general model work environments within the job stress, employee health and organization effectiveness domain. There are seven components or facets introduced in this model, they are personal facet, environmental facet, process facet, human consequences facet, organizational consequences facet, adaptive responses facet, and time facets (Beehr and Newman's, 1978)

Another model by Cartwright and Cooper (2002) called ASSET model of stress. According to the ASSET model of stress, there are eight commonly found stressors in the workplace was work relationship, work life balance, overload, job security, control, resources and communication, pay and benefits, and last stressor was job aspects.

Cox (1993) introduced the model that outlooks stress in terms of a dynamic, two-way interface between the person and their work environment. From this model more recent theoretical modelling arose, namely interactional and transactional theories of workplace stress by Cox, Hart and Cooper (1993). Interactional theories focus on structural factors of a person's relationship with their workplace. Other study by French, Caplan and Van Harrison's (1982), that was Person × Environment

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