

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ROLE AMBIGUITY, ROLE
CONFLICT, STRESS AND JOB PERFORMANCE AMONGST
ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF (GRADE 41 BELOW) IN
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH (UMS)**

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ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ROLE AMBIGUITY, ROLE CONFLICT, STRESS AND JOB PERFORMANCE AMONGST ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF (GRADE 41 BELOW) IN UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH (UMS)

This study aims to investigate as to what extent the relationship between role ambiguity, role conflict, stress and job performance among administration employee in University Malaysia Sabah (UMS). Role ambiguity and role conflict (stressor) which are perceived as the sources of stress towards the level of stress and job performance of the employees. This study also aims to investigate the relationship between stress and job performance and the relationship of personality (Type A and B) on role ambiguity and stress. A total of 48-items of questionnaire was employed to measure the variables in this study based on based on the previous researcher questionnaire and have been modified due to the appropriateness for this thesis. A sample of 122 were selected out of 350 that been distribute because of minimum of feedback with total of 195 and during the screening process, a total of 73 sample been disqualified. The findings indicate that role ambiguity has positive and significant relationship on stress and job performance while role conflict has no positive and significant relationship on stress and job performance among administration employees in UMS. The findings also indicate that stress has significantly mediate the relationship between role ambiguity and job performance. Other than that, Type A and B personality has no significant moderate the relationship between role ambiguity and stress. It is hoped that this study has contributed to studies in this field and played its part in paying the way for future studies to identify a more sustainable and replicable model based on the results of the findings and recommendation in this paper.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan melihat sejauh mana perhubungan antara kekaburan peranan kerja dan konflik peranan kerja terhadap tekanan dan prestasi kerja di kalangan pekerja pentadbiran di Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS). Kekaburan peranan kerja dan kekaburan konflik kerja merupakan salah satu punca tahap tekanan dan prestasi kerja di kalangan pekerja. Kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk mengukur sejauhmana hubungan tahap tekanan dan prestasi kerja dan selain itu juga bertujuan mengukur sejauhmana hubungan personaliti jenis A dan B diantara kekaburan peranan kerja dan tekanan. Sebanyak 48 item soalan yang di gunakan untuk mengukur pemboleh ubdah di dalam kajian ini berdasarkan soalan-soalan yang di ambil daripada pengkaji sebelumnya dan telah di ubah suai bagi menepati kesesuaian responden dan tujuan kajian ini. Sejumlah 122 responden yang telah dipilih daripada 350 soalan yang diedarkan. Disebabkan oleh maklum balas sejumlah 195 pada asal nya dan setelah melalui proses pemeriksaan, hanya 122 responden yang dipilih dan 73 tidak boleh digunakan bagi tujuan kajian ini. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan kekaburan peranan kerja mempunyai hubungan positif dan signifikan terhadap tekanan dan prestasi kerja sementara itu, konflik peranan kerja tidak mempunyai hubungan positif dan tidak signifikan terhadap tekanan dan prestasi kerja dikalangan pekerja pentadbiran di UMS. Dapatan kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa tekanan merupakan pengantara yang signifikan di antara kekaburan peranan kerja dan prestasi kerja pekerja. Selain daripada itu, jenis personality jenis A and B bukanlah pengantara yang signifikan di antara kekaburan peranan kerja dan tekanan. Adalah di harap bahawa kajian ini dapat member sumbangan kepada penyelidikan dalam bidang ini, dan memainkan peranan dalam membuka jalan untuk kajian-kajian untuk mengenalpasti model yang lebih lengkap dan sempurna pada masa hadapan berdasarkan kepada keputusan dan penemuan didalam kajian ini.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

The core of enterprise competition always change with the times, 60s the core elements of competition is technology, 70s is management, 80s is sales, 90s is the brand. In 21st century the core of enterprise competitiveness is human resource. Every successful manager recognized that the greatest asset of a company is no matter how it has strong assets and what a good product, but his human resource and human capital.

Companies are made up of individuals organized in functional groups to attend to the business at hand. Some companies are successful and some are not. In their study, (Tracy and Presha, 2002) found that role conflict and role ambiguity as organizational stressors are thought to reduce an employee's ability to perform by diverting effort away from performing job duties and towards coping with the stressors. In other words, they assume individuals possess a limited amount of energy and effort, which must be divided among the tasks at hand. The presence of stressors represents an added task and requires attention in the form of coping. Further, this drain on capacity is thought to increase when stressors are present over prolonged periods of time. Because the presence of stress reduces the resources available for job duties, performance declines, satisfaction decreases and one's intent to turnover increases.

Hence, G. Robert (1997) found that only at the expense of increased subjective effort and behavioural and physiological costs that performance may be protected under stress by the recruitment of further resources. Predictions about patterns of latent decrement under performance protection are evaluated in relation to the human performance literature. Even where no primary task decrements may be detected,

performance may show disruption of subsidiary activities or the use of less efficient strategies, as well as increased psycho physiological activation, strain, and fatigue after effects.

Taking its inspiration from the work of authors such as those mention above, this study aimed to explore the marketing research of assessing the relationship between performance and stress experience by those ultimately render it successful or un successful, namely its employees.

1.2 Overview of Universiti Malaysia Sabah

Universiti Malaysia Sabah or UMS is the ninth Malaysian public university located in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia and was established on November 24, 1994. His Majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong proclaimed the establishment of UMS under Section 6(1) of the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971. There are currently 13 schools and 9 research institutes in UMS. UMS' first campus was sited at the site of Kolej Komuniti Yayasan Sabah (KKYS) on the grounds of Yayasan Sabah (Sabah Foundation) itself. The first intake consisted of 205 undergraduates, with its residences located just beside the football field, on the compound of Yayasan Sabah.

Initially, the university management office operated at the Malaysian Ministry of Education in Kuala Lumpur. It only shifted to Kota Kinabalu in 1995 by renting buildings to cater to its needs. In August the same year, physical development began to take place on a 999-acre (4 km²) land, located to the north of Kota Kinabalu City. The first phase of its construction was only completed in 2000.

The 13 faculties include School of Social Sciences, School of Science and Technology, School of Psychology and Social Work, School of Engineering and Information Technology, School of Food Science and Nutrition, School of International Tropical Forestry, School of Business and Economics, School of Education and Social Development, School of Art Studies, School of Medicine, School of Sustainable Agriculture, Centre for the Promotion of Knowledge and Language Learning and Centre

for Co curriculum and Student Development. There are also an institute/research/unit and Centre include Tropical Biology and Conservation Research Institute, Biotechnology Research Institute, Borneo Marine Research Institute, Ethnographic and Development Research Unit, Psychology and Social Health Research Unit, Centre for Natural Disasters Studies, Centre for Research and Entrepreneurial Development, Centre for Remote Sensing and GIS and Centre for Rural Education and Development.

1.3 Problem Statement

Many researchers have studied the effects of stress on performance. McGrath (1978) reported that stress enables people to perform some tasks more effectively and the rationale is that improved performance can be attributed to increased determination from the employee. However, if the stressor continues, it eventually takes it's badly, and results in decreased performance and deleterious health consequences. Furthermore, workers are aware of the causes that stress has had on their own performances. Half of all workers say that job stress reduces their productivity (Lawless, 1992).

Excessive job-related stress is not a small or isolated problem. Over one-third of all American workers thought about quitting their jobs in 1990. One-third believes they will burn-out in the near future, and one-third feels that job stress is the single greatest source of stress in their lives. Nearly three-fourths of all workers feel that job stress lowers their productivity, and they experience health problems as a consequence. Lawless (1992) Furthermore, this is not exclusively a United States phenomenon. A Japanese poll conducted by the Health and Welfare Ministry in 1988 indicated that 45 per cent of workers felt stress from their jobs.

A variety of factors that derived the employee by being stress that lead to their job performance, some of the factors according to McGrath (1978) is adverse working conditions, such as excessive noise, extreme temperatures, or overcrowding, can be a source of job-related stress. Arnold and Feldman (1986) emphasize the damages

effects of role ambiguity, conflict, overload, under load, poor interpersonal relationships are also a common source of stress in organizations.

Recently, many studies done globally on stress among academic staff in higher education industry indicate that the phenomenon of occupational stress in universities is increasing and widespread, (Cheah, 2010). In Malaysia, the number of universities has increased tremendously over the past few years because of the increasing of the total numbers of student that enrol in the IPTS/IPTA. As this number increases, university staff may face more problems in their job as management faces competitive pressure from other universities (Ahsan et al, 2009).

Cheah, 2010 study on stress and job performance among academic staff in Universiti Malaysia Sabah stated that occupational stress does have a positive outcome in terms of job performance among lecturers in UMS. This study was concerned to examine the relationship between stress and job performance amongst non academican (administrative staffs grade 41 below) in Universiti Malaysia Sabah whether the positive or negative relationship will be discover because of the different job description compare to academican staff and most of the previous research have been mentioned that the stress will lead to decreasing job performance.

1.4 Research Questions

RQ1: What is the relationship between role ambiguity and job performance?

RQ2: What is the relationship between role conflict and job performance?

RQ3: What is the relationship between role ambiguity and stress?

RQ4: What is the relationship between role conflict and stress?

RQ5: What is the relationship between stress and job performance?

RQ6: What is the mediating effect of stress on the relationship between role ambiguity and job performance?

RQ7: What is the mediating effect of stress on the relationship between role conflict and job performance?

RQ8: What is the moderator effect of personality on the relationship between role ambiguity and stress?

RQ9: What is the moderating effect of personality on the relationship between role conflict and stress?

1.5 Objective of the study

The study set out to investigate two set of relationship which is between the stress and job performance of employee in the organization as well as the relationship between these constructs and the demographic variables of gender, educational level and marital status. The objectives are:

1. To study the relationship between role ambiguity and job performance.
2. To study the relationship between role conflict and job performance.
3. To study the relationship between role ambiguity and stress.
4. To study the relationship between role conflict and stress.
5. To examine the relationship between stress and job performance.
6. To examine the mediating effect of stress on the relationship between role ambiguity and job performance.
7. To examine the mediating effect of stress on the relationship between role conflict and job performance.
8. To examine the moderating effects of personality towards the relationship between role ambiguity and stress
9. To examine the moderating effects of personality towards the relationship between role conflict and stress

1.6 Scope of study

The scope of this study is focusing on administrative staffs grade 41 below in Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Malaysian's ninth public institution located in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. The focused employees' administration included employees from the school and also other department such as chancellery in the University Malaysia Sabah.

The scope in the literature review of this study focused on two key areas which are job performance and stress focusing on factors role ambiguity and role conflict and the linkage between occupational stress and job performance with the factors of moderators.

This research have been using the basic research whereby the purpose is to generate more knowledge and understanding of the phenomena of interest and to build theories based on the research result. The limitation while the research is continues is the final data of measuring the job performance will be either unfair or fair because the employee itself will evaluate them self by the questionnaire because of the confidential data will be not given by the employer regarding their employees' performance. Therefore, probably the limitation is on the quantitative data.

1.7 Significance of the study

Every successful employer recognized that the greatest asset of a company is no matter how it has strong assets and what a good product, but their human resource and human capital. Competition among organization is basically the human resource to compete, the condition of success is the company must have the employees which match the goal for the company's development, and put the company benefits first. Employees job performance play an important role that being influence by the employee stress. This is would help the organization towards their organization success and by seeing that started from their employee, therefore it is significant for study how the stress can lead to the job performance for the employees. This is because the level of employee job performance is important to the organization.

Through this study, it is hoped that it could enhance the understanding of certain factors that can cause stress among personnel, particularly employees in the University Malaysia Sabah. This is duly important since stress usually lead to negative impact not only to the individual but also the organization. Apart from that, the study hopes to enhance the understanding on the significance of the moderating factor such as personality towards the relationship. Knowing and understanding the sources of stress and characteristic of personality is indeed important information that might help in formulating various approaches in managing personnel particularly in stress management.

By measuring the relationship, the organization can take seriously on their employee especially on creating healthy competitive environment. This is an important part because stress will lead to the employee health problem that will cause an organization from the perspective of employee job performance and also increasing of health cost.

This study hoped to serve as guidance and a stepping stone for further studies in various aspects of improving the quality and productivity in the higher employees performance as a whole by understanding the level of stress that impact the job performance.

1.8 Definitions of Key Variables

1.8.1 Job performance

Behrman and Perreault (1984) stated that many studies treat effort as part of job performance, which is defined broadly as an aggregate construct of effort, skill, and outcomes that are important to the employee and outcomes that are important to the firm. Similar to the work of Bagozzi (1978), a few studies use a narrow definition of job performance based on actual sales or other objective productivity measures. However, these studies do not include effort as a separate construct.

1.8.2 Stress

The definition of stress exists in many versions. De Kloet, Joels, & Holsboer, (2005) stated that stress response can be characterized as behavioural and neuroendocrine activation associated with exposure to a threatening stimulus. Hormones and neurotransmitters released during stress are believed to be responsible for behavioural changes associated with stress exposure including effects on learning and memory. The effect of stress exposure on learning and memory is complex and is determined by factors such as length of stress exposure, nature of the stress stimulus, specific cognitive function examined, age and gender.

While Salas et al. (1996) stated that the recent past has witnessed an intellectual convergence around the definition of stress as the person's perception of the 'balance' or 'transaction' between demands and abilities in coping with them. One definition that gains wide recognition, within the 'transactional' paradigm, is that, stress is a process by which certain work demands evoke an appraisal process in which perceived demands exceed resources and result in undesirable physiological, emotional, cognitive and social changes.

There is no strong consensus that can form an exact definition, but to limit the problems and clear the point of view used in this research, the proper definition of stress can be stated as "Mismatch between the demands and pressure on the person, on the other hand, and their knowledge and abilities, on the other. It challenges their ability to cope with work. This includes not only situations where the pressure of work exceeds the worker's ability to cope but also where the worker's knowledge and abilities are not sufficiently utilized and that is the problem for them Stavroula (2003).

1.8.3 Role ambiguity

Role ambiguity is the general term to describe the situation when an individual is not clear about the various expectations that people have from his role and the uncertainty on the part of an employee about what their role within an organisation actually is and what colleagues expect of them (Hirak & Suresh, 2009).

1.8.4 Role conflict

According to Manshor et al., 2003, role conflict emerges when the worker has to choose between competing demands or expectations and incompatibility of enactment of two or more different roles that one person can enact at a certain time or place. The role conflict can be of short duration, tied to a certain situation, or long-lived.

1.8.5 Personality

Type A and Type B personality theory is a theory which describes two common, contrasting personality types. The high-strung Type A and the easy-going Type B as patterns of behavior that could either raise or lower respectively. The theory describes a Type A individual as ambitious, aggressive, business-like, controlling, highly competitive, impatient, preoccupied with his or her status, time-conscious, and tightly wound. People with Type B personalities are generally patient, relaxed, easy-going, and at times lacking an overriding sense of urgency (Ivancevich, 2002).

1.9 Summary

This chapter has provided a brief introduction to, and overview of the research study. The context and rationale of the study were set, and the constructs at hand were defined by means of reference to the literature. The chapter was concluded by a description of the objectives and the significant of the study. In chapter 2, the theory underlying the constructs at hand are presented and discussed.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter enlightens the definitions, theoretical explanations and some historical research of the pertinent variables, namely stress and job performance and also the moderating. This chapter also discusses previous studies on the issues concern.

2.2 Stress

Stress has been defined in different ways over the years. Originally, it was conceived as pressure from the environment, then as strain within the person. The generally accepted definition today is one of the interactions between the situation and the individual. It is the psychological and physical state that results when the resources of the individual are not sufficient to cope with the demands and pressures of the situation. Thus, stress is more likely in some situations than others and in some individuals than others. Stress is not always negative or harmful and indeed, the absence of stress is death. Stress is the non-specific response of the body to any demand, positive or negative, made upon it (Kazmi, Amjad, and Khan 2008).

2.2.1 Definition of Stress

McGrath, 1976 stated that the psychological study of stress stretches back over nearly 100 years and has been marked by vigorous discussions around its proper definition. Selye (1936) defined stress as the "nonspecific (that is common) result of any demand upon the body, be the effect mental or somatic", hence McGrath (1976) defined stress broadly, arguing that it involves an interaction between a person and his/her environment. Lazarus and Folkman, 1984 make a further definition whereby defined

stress as "a relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her wellbeing". While quite broad, these definitions clearly point to stress as an outcome for individuals who face taxing situational demands. In this way, stress is perceptual, and, for any given situation, is likely to vary from person to person.

Theoretical and empirical research point to a robust source of variation in stress, the judgments people make about the situations they face and whether they have what it takes to manage them. Specifically, the degree to which people will experience stress at the prospect of a performance situation depends on two judgments: (1) their cognitive appraisal of the demands of the situation and (2) whether they believe they have the resources to cope with the situation study by Folkman, Lazarus, Gruen, & DeLongis, 1986; Lazarus & DeLongis, 1983; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984.

Shirom in 1982 stated that while many scholars accept the generic concept of stress, the literature is characterised by tremendous conceptual diversity. Some used the term stress in reference to an 'objective stimuli condition' (Weitz, 1970); others used the term interchangeably with a wide variety of response (Sells, 1970); yet others used the term in reference to a complete cycle of events representing both the stressors (stimuli condition) and the organism reaction to them (Lazarus, 1996).

Cummings and Cooper (1979) have designed another way of understanding the stress process that can be simply explained:

- (i) Individuals, for the most part, try to keep their thoughts, emotions and relationship with the world in a steady state.
- (ii) Each factor of a person's emotional and physical state has a range of stability in which that person feels comfortable. On the other hand, when forces disrupt one of these factors beyond the range of stability, the individual must act or cope to restore a feeling of comfort.
- (iii) An individual's behaviour aimed at maintaining a steady state makes up his or her 'adjustment process' or coping strategies.

Baron (1986) referred stress to the presence of various stressors such as external sources of pressure. Stress has been commonly used to refer to the external conditions, which result in an individual experiencing 'discomfort', 'tension', etc.

According to Johnson and Idvik (1996), stress is a mental and physical condition, which affects an individual's productivity, effectiveness, personal health and quality of work. Ivancevich and Matteson (2002) defined stress as an adaptive response by individual difference that is a consequence of any action, situation, or event that places special demands on a person. In a response definition, stress is seen partially as a response to some stimulus, called a stressor. Stress is defined as a pattern of emotional states and physiological reactions occurring in situations where individuals perceive threats from the environment beyond their ability to manage (Fang, 2001).

Rollinson, Broadfield and Edwards (1998) stated that stress is the degree of tension, anxiety and pressure experienced by a person. The authors further stated that occupational stress is defined as a person's recognition of their inability to cope with the demands relating to work. They noted that in the literature factors, which cause stress, are usually referred to as stressors and the outcomes of stress as strain. The US National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (1999) defined job stress as 'harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resource, or needs of the worker and job stress can lead to poor health and even injury'. Work stress, job stress and occupational stress is often used interchangeably (Dollard, and Winefield, 2003).

Work stress is defined as a result of interaction between the individual with the job and environment that causes deviation in their normal functioning like being in anxiety and depressed (Matteson and Ivancevich, 1999). Gaillard and Wientjes (1994) stated that work stress is defined as the occurrence of negative emotions, which are evoked by demanding situations in the workplace such as fear, anger, guilt, shame, grief, envy and jealousy. Flippo (1984) stated that stress is any experience that creates physiological and psychological imbalances within an individual. Stress at the workplace occurs when an environmental situation is perceived as presenting demands

which threaten to exceed a person's capabilities or resources in meeting them (Stoner and Freeman, 1989). Work stress, either acute or chronic, would that less organizational effectiveness since stressful employees usually are not able to fully concentrate on their task (Ungku Norulkamar, 1995).

2.2.2 The determinants of Stress

Work stress is defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when job requirements do not match the worker's capabilities, resources, and needs (National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health 1999). It is recognized world-wide as a major challenge to individual mental and physical health, and organizational health (ILO 1986). Stressed workers are also more likely to be unhealthy, poorly motivated, less productive and less safe at work. And their organizations are less likely to succeed in a competitive market. By some estimates work-related stress costs the national economy a staggering amount in sick pay, lost productivity, health care and litigation costs (Palmer et al. 2004). Work stress can come from a variety of sources and affect people in different ways.

Although the link between psycho-social aspects of the job and the health and well-being of workers has been well documented (Dollard and Metzger 1999), limited work has been done on the effects of distinct stressors on job performance. As well, various protective factors can prevent or reduce the effects of work stress, and little research has been done toward understanding these mitigating individual and organizational factors. One important source of work stress is job strain.

According to the demand/control model (Karasek 1979), job strain is determined by the interactions between psychological demands and decision latitude (see Work stress). The first dimension, the psychological demands on the worker, relate to pace and intensity, skills required, and the ability to keep up with colleagues. The second dimension relates to the degree of creativity versus repetition, as well as the extent of freedom and responsibility to decide what to do and when to do it

(Lindström 2005). Four work environments can then be derived: high-strain jobs, active jobs, low-strain (relaxed) jobs, and passive jobs.

Though simple identification of low- and high-strain jobs may be important, the distinction between job control and psychological demands must be retained because each category can have different effects on workers and their organizations. For instance, when job control is high and psychological demands are also high, learning and growth are the predicted behavioural outcomes. Much of the energy aroused by job challenges can be translated into direct action, effective problem solving with little residual strain. The growth and learning stimuli are conducive to high productivity. On the other hand, low demand and low control lead to a very un motivating job setting, which results in gradual loss of previously acquired skills (Karasek 1998).

2.2.3 Theories of Stress

Figure 2.1 shows the model of stressors, stress and outcomes illustrated by Ivancevich et al (2008). It shows the link among occupational stressors at individual level, stress and outcomes. The experience from the stressors leads to stress which produced outcomes that are divided into three categories which are behavioural, cognitive and physiological.

Previous literature focused on the common link of various occupational stressors at individual level with lower levels of job satisfaction and higher turnover (Kinman, 2001), ways of coping the stressors and the effect on job performance focusing more on other professions such as nursing (Lambert et al., 2004; Nizami et al., 2006) and customer service (Dole and Schroeder, 2001) to name a few. Moreover, research examining the impact of stress levels on the productivity of staff and universities is sparse (Jacobs et al., 2007). Although there is increasing evidence from research that indicates the association between occupational stress and job performance exists, there is little attention paid to a specific occupation.

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