

JOB STRESS AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE AMONG OFFICERS IN PUBLIC SPORTS INSTITUTIONS

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Received: 13 April, 2022

Accepted: 22 June, 2022

Published: 15 Sept, 2022

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ABSTRACT

Employees are the most critical assets of an organisation, but they experience stress in their job, resulting in physical and mental health problems that affect their performance. The impact of job stress on employee performance is an area of concern for organisations. Job stress affects employees who have work demands and pressures beyond their knowledge and ability to cope. Stressful workers incur healthcare costs due to stress-related illnesses that affect their work performances. The impact of stress on employees' performance and productivity of organisations caused the initiation of this research. The stress and job performance of sports officers are unknown. The study examined the impact of stress on the job performance of Malaysian sports officers to contribute to the filling of this knowledge gap. Three variables of job stress of role ambiguity, role conflict, and workload (Conant, 2016; Wijayanti & Fauzi, 2020) were used in the research. The methodology employed a questionnaire designed and administered to respondents and used descriptive and inferential statistics for the data analyses. The participants were 100 Malaysian sports officers, 30 were from the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), 20 were from the University College Shahputra, and 50 were from the Pahang Sports Council. All the participants completed a questionnaire that consisted of the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and the Generic Job Stress Questionnaire (GJSQ). The result showed that most employees had moderate stress ($n=57$, 59.4%), and 58.3% ($n=56$) of the sports officers showed average work performance. It also showed a significant relationship between role ambiguity, role conflict, and workload and employee job stress, and the stress negatively affected their job performance ($r=-0.927$, $p=0.01$). The results of this study are expected to contribute to an understanding of how job stress affects sports officers' performance. The management of organisations can use the findings to reduce job stress to enhance employees' wellbeing and productivity. For example, the management of Malaysian sports organisations could use how stress affects employee performance to develop policies and implement strategies to reduce job stress and improve employees' wellbeing and productivity. Findings from this study may also assist various human resource practitioners, researchers, and higher education institutions to build relevant policies to reduce employee stress to achieve a sustainable work-life balance practice within sports institutions. In addition, this study will also be used as a guide to researchers in the future. For example, it could be extended to organisations outside the sports industry and explore how occupation, years of employment, ethnicity, participation in physical activity, religion, and culture affect employees' stress and job performance.

Keywords: *job stress, role ambiguity, role conflict, employee workload*

INTRODUCTION

Definition of Stress And Its Impact On Employees

Job stress is a critical issue for all organisations as it affects employee performance (Raza et al., 2018, Yunus et al., 2018) and organisations' efficiency. Job stress is defined as an employees' response to external stimuli in the job situation that affects employees' performance (Deng et al., 2019). The question to be posed here is; what is stress and job stress? Stress results from an individual's responses to the external environment that causes psychological pressure, behavioural and physiological overload (Ivancevich, 2011). According to Herrero et al. (2012), stress is a non-specific response of the body to any demands caused by a situation's consequences. Additionally, Davis et al. (2008) define stress as a forceful circumstance in which individuals are threatened with limitations or demands related to their needs.

Similarly, the pressure associated with work creates stress for employees, leading to the negativity that affects their job performance (Arshadi & Damiri, 2013; Holden et al., 2019). Many organisational factors cause job stress, including insecurity, job dissatisfaction, underperformance, and resistance to innovative management or technology changes (Schaufeli et al., 2009). Furthermore, job stress is a challenge for employers as it causes lower productivity, increased absenteeism, employee alcoholism, drug abuse, high blood pressure, and cardiovascular problems (Hussain et al., 2011). Stress can also cause fatigue, hypertension, headaches, depression, and anxiety among employees (Holden et al., 2019).

Greenberg et al. (2007) observed that undue demand made on employees' time and resources causes the job stress they experience at their workplace. When employees experience stress at their workplace, it reduces their ability to make decisions, as they lack the motivation to take the initiative in decision-making (Greenberg et al., 2007). Additionally, Greenberg et al. (2007) noted that psychological and physical factors and the workplace's social environment cause job stress. Woo, Tak, Chung, & Cho (2016) agreed that job stress is caused by the work culture, the physical work environment, and the interplay between psychology and employees' actions.

The Effect of Stress on Employees' Performance

The examination of previous research has demonstrated a relationship between employees' job stress and job performance (Raza et al., 2018; Yunus et al., 2018). Job performance is an activity where an individual can complete the task efficiently using the available resources (Raza et al., 2018; Yunus et al., 2018). Therefore, job performance comprises all employee activities, which support organisational goals (Magnier-Watanabe et al., 2020; Wang & Chen, 2020). Job stress can influence employee wellbeing, such as fatigue, lack of incentive to work, employee turnover, infidelity, and lack of timeliness, causing poor performance (Pathak, 2015). Kotteeswari & Sharief (2014) also found that job stress affects employee performance at work.

According to Hans, Mubeen & Saidi (2014), job stress is an essential issue in an organisation that affects employees and their performance. Hans, Mubeen & Saidi (2014) found a negative relationship between job stress and employee performance among 100 teachers in Muscat, Oman. The teachers experienced stress because they were burdened with a heavy workload, and as a result, they had to sacrifice their time at home to complete their job at work (Hans, Mubeen & Saidi, 2014). The higher employees experience job stress, the greater it negatively affects their performance (Wijayanti & Fauzi, 2020). While the study by Chidiebere Chikwem (2017) showed that approximately 80% of the variance in police officers' job performance is explained by job stress indicating a negative relationship between police officers' job stress. The findings also showed that police officers' physical exercise was positively related to their job performance.

In Malaysia, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) found that healthcare costs for stressed workers are higher than unstressed employees due to stress-related illness (Health Advocate, n.d.). In addition, Regus' Global's survey found that 70 per cent of Malaysian employees reported having more occupational-related stress illnesses (Muzaffar Syah, 2016). Malaysia's NIOSH chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye stated that occupational stress could affect individual and organisational productivity and lead to sickness and absenteeism (The Star, May 18, 2016). Similarly, Malaysian sports officers are no exception and are likely to experience stress at their workplace. Therefore, the present study was initiated to examine whether or not Malaysian sports officers experience job stress and its impact on their performance.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Based on the literature review on job stress and employee performance, there is limited empirical evidence on the influence of job stress and sports officers' performance. Therefore, this study aimed at filling this gap in knowledge by addressing the effects of job stress on Malaysian sports officers' job performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

When individuals are in situations beyond their ability to cope, they encounter stress (Greenberg et al., 2007). Additionally, Greenberg et al. (2007) found that job stress was a harmful external factor in the work environment, including psychological, physical, or social. Furthermore, the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) (2002) defined job stress as the destructive physical and emotional reactions when a job's necessities do not match employees' capabilities, resources, or desires. In other words, job stress is a strain, depression, fretfulness, anxiety, and angst that employees encounter in their workplace when they are overloaded with copious demands and expectations, which the employees have to complete within a short time frame (Burman & Goswami, 2018). However, not all employees are negatively affected by stress as it depends on their ability to cope with it (Edwards & Cooper, 1988). This difference is due to people using

different methods, abilities, personalities, and coping mechanisms to handle stress (Edwards & Cooper, 1988).

Theories of Job Stress and Employees' Performance

There are many theories of job stress, and the main ones are briefly examined below. The transactional theory suggests that stress is the transaction between an employee and their job situation, which challenges their resources and thus threatens their wellbeing (Lazarus, 1986). An employee's appraisal of this transaction explains the process and experience of stress (Lazarus et al., 2001). The assessment is influenced by employees' personalities, situational demands, coping skills, and previous experiences (Prem et al., 2017). Stress is caused by how employees perceive and evaluate the stressors at work (Ganster & Rosen 2013). However, the transactional theory is criticised for ignoring employees' history, future, goals, and identities (Harris, Daniels & Briner, 2004) and ignoring the moderating effect of coping strategies on alleviating job stress (Lazarus, 2006).

The Interactional theory of stress sees stress as the interaction of the job situation and employees' response (Lazarus & Launier, 1978). The Effort-Reward Imbalance (ERI) theory is an example of Interactional theory. It posits that effort at work is based on social reciprocity of how employees effort is rewarded by pay (Siegrist, 1996), and any imbalance in effort and income leads to stress. However, unlike the Transactional theory, the employee does not engage in any appraisal here (Siegrist, 1996).

Another Interactional theory is the Person-Environment that suggests that work-related stress arises due to a lack of fit between the employees' skills, resources and abilities, and the demands of the work environment (Caplan, 1987). Stress occurs when a lack of fit exists between employees' abilities and demands (French, Rodgers & Cobb, 1974). The final example of Interactional theory is the Job Demand-Control (JDC) theory. It suggests that stress is caused by the interaction between job demands and employees abilities and coping skills. It includes workload, interpersonal conflict, job control, work-related decisions, and employees' skills (Karasek Jr, 1979). Employees who experience high demands paired with low power experience stress (Beehr et al. 2001).

Cooper and Marshall's (1976) theory of stress explains stress at work and how stress leads to acute symptoms and chronic diseases of physical and mental nature and the employee characteristics associated with work-related stress.

The above theories all describe stress at work. However, job stress cannot remain separate from general life stress. The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, an integrated theory of stress, examines the combination of job and family stress (Hobfoll, 1989).

The theories of job stress see the major variables of job stress as role ambiguity, role conflict, and workload (Conant, 2016; Wijayanti & Fauzi, 2020), and they are explained in detail below. These variables are also used to explain the results of the present study.

The Influence of Role Ambiguity on Employee Job Stress

According to Ali et al. (2016), role ambiguity occurs when employees lack the information needed to achieve their organisation's roles. Roesler, Kusserow, & Rau (2014) explained that role ambiguity occurs when employees are unsure about their job's role. Similarly, Pindek & Spector (2016) saw role ambiguity associated with employees with conflicting positions. Conant (2016) found that stress caused by role ambiguity affected employees' performance and that of their organisations. Gilboa et al. (2013) also highlighted that role ambiguity causes an employee's performance to decline and that of the organisation. Ambiguity arises when employees do not receive specific explanations of the jobs they are assigned to complete. Therefore, a precise job description is needed to reduce ambiguity and stress in employees.

The Effect of Role Conflict on Employee Job Stress

Role conflict is used to explain the causes of stress to employees. Malik & Waheed (2010) found that role conflict occurs when an employee's roles are different and could be reconciled. When this happens, an employee performs conflicting roles that lead to role conflict and stress (Schaufeli et al., 2009). Role conflict also occurs when an unsuitable demand on an employee such as concession threatens and harms employee performance. According to Nicklaus (2007), there are four types of role conflict. First, it occurs when others' role expectancy is incompatible with the individual orientations of the employees. Second, inter-sender conflict happens when an employee experiences role conflict after receiving conflicting expectations from two different people. Third, an employee experiences an inter-role conflict where the requirement to complete numerous roles simultaneously, where the roles are unrelated and unsuited. Finally, intra-sender-conflict is an employee's abilities, and the resources available to them conflict with the task to be completed.

Bakker & Demerouti (2016) see role conflict as role ambiguity, which is the confusion of the work an employee has to complete. These conflicts can affect employee performance. Yu (2014) confirmed that role conflict and role ambiguity negatively correlate to employee performance. Beauchamp et al. (2005) concurred that when role conflict increases, employee performance reduces, and Karatepe & Sokmen (2006) noted a negative relationship between role conflict and employee performance. Overall, when an employee performs a variety of contradictory roles, stress occurs. Consequently, stress affects an employee's mental and emotional state along with the employee's productivity level.

The Effect Workload on Stress of Employees

The workload of employees is proposed to explain the causes of job stress which negatively affects an employee's performance (Elloy & Smith, 2003; Wijayanti & Fauzi, 2020). Shah et al. (2011) describe workload as a form of mental stress. Elloy & Smith (2003) suggested that workload occurs when employees accept too many work demands beyond their abilities. The workload can be qualitative or quantitative (Elloy & Smith,

2003). Qualitative workload refers to the circumstances where the workload is too perplexing to complete. In contrast, a quantitative workload is the excessive number of assignments to be accomplished within a deadline (Elloy & Smith, 2003).

Shah et al. (2011) agreed that large organisations' employees tended to have numerous tasks with short deadlines for completion. Such situations put the employees under pressure to meet the deadlines (Awang, Ahmad & Zin (2010), leading to stress and poor performance (LePine et al., 2016). According to LePine et al. (2016), the workload has a negative correlation with employee performance. Azmi et al. (2016) added that the management period for completing tasks resulted in employees working under pressure resulting in stress and poor performance.

The question to be posed here is; what is the effect of job stress on employee performance? According to Dwamena (2012), job stress can affect the performance of employees and organisations. Furthermore, Mahiri (2016) observed that job stress adversely affected employee performance. Badar (2011) also found that job stress negatively affects employee performance. Finally, Nixon (1979) proposes that the relationship between job stress and employee performance is seen in the stress response curve shown in Figure 1 below.

The curve in Figure 1 demonstrates that performance rises with an increase in stress level (eustress) until it reaches a point where the performance starts to decline (Nixon, 1979). It means that employee performance will decrease if the job stress reaches a level that the employee cannot control (distress) (Nixon, 1979). When stress is managed, performance increases (eustress), but unmanaged stress causes reduced performance (distress) (Nixon, 1979). Indeed, previous studies have shown that job stress affects job performance (Deng et al., 2019). Jamal (2007) also sees the relationship between job stress and employee performance as two, and they are negative and positive relationships. A negative relationship occurs when performance decreases with job stress, while a positive relationship happens when performance increases with job stress.

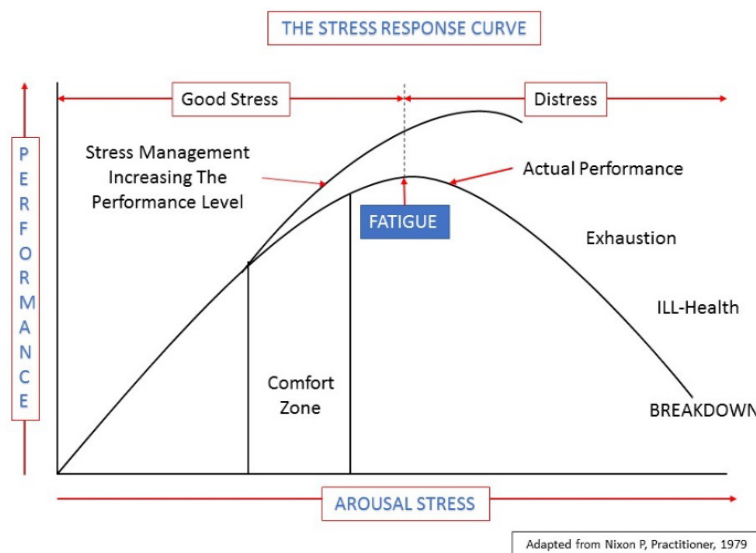


Figure 1. The relationship between job stress and employee performance

Cooper (2013) found that job stress factors, such as role ambiguity, role conflict, and workload, contribute to prolonged stress and cause a decline in employee performance if they are not controlled. Beehr (2014) also concluded that the negative relationship between job stress and employee performance occurs if they fail to reduce their pressure. Prolonged stress and loss of control over job requirements make employees less motivated, depressed, and lethargic, negatively affecting their performance (Beehr, 2014).

As explained above, a positive relationship happens when an employee achieves better performance because of stress. It occurs when an employee feels that job stress is challenging to overcome (Jamal, 2007). Additionally, motivated employees often assume that stress is positive and challenging for them to work hard (Bowen, 2016) to achieve results. Shultz (2010), in an earlier study, agreed that a positive relationship between job stress and employee performance is caused by reasonable stress, such as dealing with an assignment with short deadlines. It leads to employees challenging themselves to work more efficiently to achieve the requirements in the short term (Shultz, 2010).

The Gap In Knowledge Addressed By The Present Research

The previous literature review shows that employees experience stress. The study on employees' job stress and their performance have been conducted on police officers (Chikwem, 2017), healthcare workers (Deng et al., 2019), nurses (Hosseinabadi et al., 2018; Bai & Ravindran, 2021), airport security screeners (Chung, Jung & Sohn, 2017), seafarers (Yeuna et al., 2018), and teachers (Ouellette et al., 2018). Simultaneously, most existing sports research focused on stress and athletes' performance (Arnold, Edwards & Rees, 2018). Overall, the sports research concluded that stress negatively influences athletes' performance (Frenkel et al., 2019). What is missing in the previous study is investigations on sports officers' levels of stress and their job performances. The present research aimed to fill this gap in knowledge by examining the influence of job stress on Malaysian sports officers' performance.

METHODS

This study involved designing and administering a questionnaire to sports officers to assess the influence of stress on their job performance. It then used descriptive and inferential statistics to examine the results to address the effects of job stress on Malaysian sports officers' job performances (Baumgartner & Hesley, 2013). Descriptive research describes a phenomenon and its characteristics. This research is concerned with what rather than how or why something has happened. Therefore, survey tools are used to collect data (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).

Sampling Technique

A convenience sampling strategy was adopted as a sampling technique (Souiden & Jabeur, 2015). A total of 100 sports officers, comprising 30 respondents from International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), 20 respondents from University College Shahputra, and 50 respondents from the Pahang Sports Council, participated in the study. These three organisations were chosen because they are statutory bodies for sports located in the capital of Pahang and have a large number of sports officers compared to other organisations.

Research Instrument

A pilot study was conducted to test the validity (construct) and reliability of the items in the questionnaire. The pilot study tested the questions in the questionnaire on sports officers at the Institut Kemahiran Ikhtisas Pahang. A back-translation technique was employed to translate the questionnaire's content into Malay and English to increase the instrument's validity and reliability. Using this method helped improve the ability to collect accurate, less bias and high-quality data (Cresswell, 1998; Sekaran and Bougie, 2011). They showed reliability for the PSS questionnaire was 0.93 Cronbach's Alpha. The reliability of the GJSQ questionnaire was 0.93, Cronbach's Alpha for role ambiguity and workload, with 0.95 Cronbach's Alpha for role conflict. The reliability of the EPS questionnaire was 0.92, Cronbach's Alpha. The questions were reliable and required no significant changes, and thus all items were retained in their original format during data collection.

Every 100 respondents completed a questionnaire that consisted of four parts adapted from the previous questionnaires. The questionnaire was comprised of four components. Part one consisted of questions on the participants' gender, age, and marital status demographics. Part two comprised ten items adopted from Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) developed by Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein (1983), which measured sports officers' perceived stress levels. Respondents registered their responses to the PSS on a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranged from a minimum of 0 (never) to a maximum of 5 (very often)—summing up the responses from all ten items resulted in a final score that ranged from 0 to 40. Scores ranging from 0 – 13 were considered low stress, scores ranging from 14 – 26 were considered moderate stress, and scores ranging from 27 – 40 were deemed high stress.

Part three of the questionnaire used the Generic Job Stress Questionnaire (GJSQ) developed by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). There were three categories of stress: role ambiguity, role conflict, and workload. Respondents completed the six items which measured role ambiguity, eight items that measured role conflict, and six items that measured workload on a 5-point Likert-type scale. The role ambiguity and role conflict responses ranged from 1 (hardly any) to a maximum of 5 (a great deal). The responses for workload ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Part four covered employee performance. This section used the Employee Performance Scale (EPS) adapted from Wiedower (2001). Respondents completed the five items EPS Scale on employee performance on a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The reliability for EPS was $\alpha=0.72$. The EPS scores of less than eight were considered poor performance, scores ranging from 9 to 16 were deemed average, and the scores ranging from 17 or more were regarded as good performance.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher sought permission from the three authorities of the institutions to carry out a study with its employees. The authorities were briefed on the purpose of the research and its importance by the researcher. The administrator selected a day for the researcher to conduct a briefing session with the respondents upon approval. The briefing described the purpose and importance of this study. The researcher briefed the respondents on the items in the questionnaire to ensure clarity and complete understanding of the items. The respondents took approximately 20-30 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Upon completion, the researcher collected the questionnaire for collation and analysis.

Data Analysis

A descriptive and inferential statistics were performed to analyse respondents' data. All data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) version 22.

RESULTS

The data collected were statistically analysed using SPSS version 22. Descriptive statistics on the respondents' demographic profile and identified the job stress that influences sports officers' performance. Pearson Correlation analysis was used to determine relationships between job stress and sports officers' performance in sports organisations.

There were more male respondents (60.4%) compared to female respondents (39.6%). The majority of employees aged from 30 to 39 years old (44.8% with $n=43$), followed by 20 to 29 years old (39.6 % with $n=38$), and employees aged 40 to 49 years old (9.4% with $n=9$). The number of employees who were 50 years old and above was 6.3% ($n=6$).

Table 1: Respondents' demographic profile ($n=96$)

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender ($n=100$)		
Male	57	60.4
Female	39	39.6
Age ($n=100$)		
	362	

50 and above	6	6.3
40-49	9	9.4
30-39	43	44.8
20-29	38	39.6
Marital status (n=100)		
Single	44	45.8
Separated	12	12.5
Married	44	45.8

For marital status, 45.8% (n=44) respondents are single. While 12.5% (n=12) respondents are separated from spouse and the rest married 45.8% (n=44).

Table 2: Stress levels of the respondents

Items	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Low stress	23	24.0
Moderate stress	57	59.4
High stress	16	16.7
Total	96	100

Table 2 shows the results of the stress levels of the respondents. The highest percentage was 59.4% (n=57) for moderate stress. The lowest percentage was (16.7% with n=16), and it was for high stress. 23 respondents (24.0%) registered low stress.

Table 3 shows the results of the respondents' job performance. The results indicated that 58.3% (n=56) of the sports officers showed average work performance, 17.7% (n=17) showed poor work performance, and 23 of the respondents (24.0%) had a good performance.

Table 3 : Employee performance

Items	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Poor (less than 8)	17	17.7
Average (9-16)	56	58.3
Good (more than 17)	23	24.0
Total	96	100

Table 4 shows the results of the levels of job stress among sports officers. The results indicated that role ambiguity provided the highest percentage for moderate stress at 56.3% and the lowest score of 19.8% (n=19) for major stress. For the role conflict, the results showed that the highest percentage for moderate stress is 56.3% (n = 54), and the lowest major stress is 19.8% (n=19). Workload also recorded the highest percentage for moderate stress is 56.3% (n=54), and the lowest percentage for major stress is 19.8% (n=19).

Table 4.: Level of job stressor factors among sports officers

Items	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Role Ambiguity		
Minor Stress	23	24.0
Moderate Stress	54	56.3

Major Stress	19	19.8
Role conflict		
Minor Stress	23	24.0
Moderate Stress	54	56.3
Major Stress	19	19.8
Workload		
Minor Stress	23	24.0
Moderate Stress	54	56.3
Major Stress	19	19.8

Table 5 below shows a significant positive relationship between workload (0.952**), role conflict (0.927**) and role ambiguity (0.971**) as factors that contribute to job stress at $p=0.000$.

Table 5.: *Relationship between Workload, Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity with Job Stress*

	Job stress
Workload	0.95** (p=0.00)
Role conflict	0.93** (p=0.00)
Role ambiguity	0.97** (p=0.00)

** significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

There was also a significant relationship between job stress and employee performance (Table 6). The result showed a negative correlation between job stress and employee performance -0.927** tested at 0.01 level of significance (Table 6).

Table 6.: *Relationship between job stress and employee performance*

	Employee performance
Job stress	-0.93** (p=0.00)

** significant at 0.01 (2-tailed)

DISCUSSION

This study's primary purpose was to identify the relationship between job stress and sports officers' job performance. The results are categorised into two sections: (1) the factors that influence job stress among sports officers, and (2) the influence on job stress on sports officers' performance. Based on the respondents' demographic profile (Table 1), more males than females were sports officers. It confirmed the International Labor Organization (ILO) report on low employment trends for women worldwide and expected to worsen, exacerbating gender inequality in the workforce (Cecelia, 2012). According to Cecelia (2012), Malaysia's labour force participation rates by gender in 2009 were dominated by males (78.9%) than females (46.4%).

The results showed that the majority of employees were from the 29-30-year age group. In addition, the marital status result showed that single sports officers had the highest percentage, 45.8%, compared to those who were married or separated.

Most of the employees experienced moderate stress levels (59.4%) at their workplace. However, employees' stress may lead to mental health problems such as anxiety and depression (Ahmed, 2015). Job stress arises when a job's demands do not match employees' knowledge, abilities, and coping skills to complete the job. Such stress is due to greater pressure to meet the demands of a job, and the unreasonable higher organisation expects to complete the job (Ahmed, 2015).

Factors influencing job stress among employees

The results of this study showed that all three factors of role ambiguity, role conflict and workload had a significant positive relationship with job stress ($p < 0.01$) and similar with Khattak, Ul Ain, and Iqbal (2013), which found three factors that influence job stress.

Devi and Rani (2016) supported this finding by observing that role conflict causes confused employees and increases stress levels. It is also agreed by Khattak, Ul-Ain, & Iqbal (2013), if role ambiguity increases, job stress will also increase. Mansour & Tremblay (2016) also showed that workload affects job stress levels as employees who are given workloads that exceed their ability would be under pressure to complete the task. The findings showed that role ambiguity, role conflict, and workload are the factors that influence job stress and affect employee performance. Likewise, job stress also decreases if all roles (ambiguity, conflict, and workload) decrease.

Role ambiguity faced by employees is the ambiguity of authorities, the ambiguity of the objectives and goals of their job, the confusion on the division of time, labour, and resources given to them to do their job, the ambiguity of responsibilities towards the assigned tasks, and the ambiguity of the tasks assigned.

Role conflict arises when employees must do things separately, receive assignments without assistance, and accept jobs without sufficient resources and materials needed to complete them. In addition, role conflict occurs when workers are given different and incompatible roles simultaneously, or their role overlaps with another worker or workgroup. The greater the role conflict, the higher the likelihood of a worker experiencing work-related stress. Such situations cause employees to feel pressured, which causes them to perform their duties with indifference, which negatively impacts their work performance.

Workload faced by employees who require overtime and assignments with short deadlines would lead to fatigue and demotivation and ultimately achieve poor performance. Undoubtedly, stress is essential for increasing the performance of employees but up to a certain level. In this study, the employees did their job, but their performance decreased due to role ambiguity, role conflict, and workload constraints.

Relationship between job stress and employee performance

The study found a relationship between job stress and employee performance. However, the correlation between job stress and employee performance was negative, with a significance value of 0.01. According to Azmi et al. (2016), job stress is related to performance as closely linked. This finding is similar to the results of a study by Rita, Atindanbila, and Abepuoring (2013) of nurses of two hospitals in Ghana, which found a negative relationship between job stress and employee performance. Additionally, the present study results, Rita, Atindanbila, & Abepuoring (2013), identified three factors comprising role ambiguity, role conflict, and workload causing job stress. This study's result is also consistent with a study by Beucamp, Eys, and Carron (2003) that concluded that role ambiguity, role conflict, and workload were factors of job stress that reduced the cognitive abilities, interest, and motivation of employees to work, thus affecting their level of performance.

Furthermore, Midya & Abdul Ghani (2019) study confirmed that role ambiguity and role conflict are important associations of organisational stressors that decrease employee performance. Employees are an essential asset to a company or organisation to influence the organisation's success or failure. However, employees are vulnerable, as they are under pressure due to internal or external factors and their behaviour. Rosalie and Singaravello (2020) stated that when work stress increases, employees' performance declines and relates to role conflict, work conditions, relationships, and family work. Based on the results, organisations should implement policies to prevent or reduce stress among employees to create favourable organisational policies and work culture to reduce their stress levels and increase their performance (Ahmed, 2015).

CONCLUSION

As more challenges exist within the working setting, acquiring control in the job and individual aspects is vital for the workers' population. This study has theoretical and future research implications. They are given below.

Theoretical implications

Psychological stress is a significant predictor in workplace stress models. Employees who experience high levels of work stress for long periods tend to have inadequate levels of job satisfaction and job performance; however, we can manage and facilitate good performance levels. This study shows that performance levels increase with stress levels of role ambiguity, role conflict, and workload. These are work stress factors that lower an employee's cognitive ability, interest, and motivation to work, thus affecting their level of performance. Performance levels begin to decline can lead to fatigue and health problems. In the future study, the research should examine other factors, such as supervisors' or managers' roles and social support networks, and how they affect employee job stress and job performance. It will also be beneficial to further assist

organisations and future researchers understand the role of psychological factors in promoting best performance among employees.

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country. It is recommended that a future study also investigate how employees' ethnicity and religion affect their job stress and performance.

Practical implications

Besides, findings from this paper serve as a valuable platform to inform relevant authorities and researchers to endorse a good work policy or strengthen the existing policy related to the given autonomy at work. Malaysian sports organisations could rely on the results to design programs to reduce job stress and increase employee performance. It could be through mentor-mentee programs of senior employees helping junior employees to deal with stress to improve their performance. Employees should be trained in stress management and helped to acquire coping mechanisms to deal with stress.

Contribution of Main author and Co – authors

Rozita Abdul Latif – Corresponding author, managing and arrangement of tasks among all co - authors

Maizan Mohd Nor – Main author for the ideas and the flow of thought.

Siti Aishah Wahab – Analyzing data and write out

Azlina Zid - Analyzing data and write out

Farah Zakiah Khairil Anuar – Process of collecting data of this study

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge, with gratitude, the Management of Garment Manufacturing for giving permission for this study and to the participants for completing the questionnaires and their participation in the intervention program. Special thanks to the committee members of the HPP who helped in making this project successful. We thanked Dr Kwame Ampofo-Boateng, former colleague at the University Technology MARA, for the comments on an earlier draft of this article.

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