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THE FACTOR INFLUENCING WORK STRESS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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Abstract:

This paper examines the work stress related to role conflict, work environment, and organizational issues in influencing employee motivation, morale, and performance within the organizational setting. This paper also examines the impact of environmental unpredictability on staff stress levels within the organization. This paper is purely a library-based method. This paper systematically reviews and analyses the content of various literature and sources, including journal articles, books, government websites, and reports. The paper incorporates the critical components of Cooper's Stress Model (1988), including role conflict, work environment, and organizational issues. The findings indicate that employees who experience elevated stress levels face detrimental health consequences and negative work-related encounters within the organization. It may result in impaired cognitive functioning, temporary memory deficits, and, in severe cases, compromised information retrieval abilities and reduced task focus. This paper would contribute to the body of knowledge towards more in-depth research on job stress and work performance.

Keywords:

Job Stress, Work Performance, Stress Factors, Stress Models

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) anticipates that the problem of stress at work will be a significant threat to human health by 2020 (Zafir, Nor Liza & Noor Azuan, 2013). It indicates that stress is not an occupational problem that should be taken lightly. Although every worker worldwide will experience this problem, the question is, can workers survive when stress becomes uncontrollable? It is an important issue that every organization should give serious attention (Firdaus, 2019) stated that a National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health report revealed that 40% of workers say their job is very stressful, and 25% of respondents say

it is the number one stressor in their lives. In the meantime, 80% of workers in a study of American workplaces stated that they are under stress at work and need assistance learning how to deal with stress. 40% of construction site workers over 50 have chronic back pain. Injuries and pain are contributors to depression, and when people live with chronic pain, it causes stress and injury. Almost half of the workers in Malaysia work more than eight hours a day and regularly bring work home to finish at night. The situation can cause stress and have negative implications, especially when a person cannot control the pressure of work, which will affect job satisfaction.

In the meantime, Utusan Malaysia (2006) found that those who are usually exposed to or have extreme work pressure are often among the individuals involved in cases such as suicide and death due to work pressure. It can be seen that the number of them, in total, is estimated at 2.5 million people involved; in Asia, it is estimated at as much as 60%; and Japan is among the countries that involve the death of 10,000 people every year due to work pressure that is so significant that it is famous for the symptoms of "karoshi," which is death due to too much work (Umami Kalsom, 2014). Additionally, Fonkeng (2018) urged that the issue of stress in the workplace has received the primary attention of organizations in Japan and the United States because this problem is closely related to the organization's performance as a whole. In England and Wales, stress at work is among the three largest categories of illness caused by the work environment. Therefore, unsurprisingly, by 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) anticipates that workplace stress will pose an existential risk to people's health. Nevertheless, the question is: Can workers survive when stress becomes uncontrollable? It is an issue that every organization worldwide should give serious attention to. Technological changes, social changes, and discontinuities in the employment sector make the problem of stress a severe global issue (Fonkeng, 2018).

Hayes and Withington (2007) added that stress within the work environment might harm the organization in Mahadevan & Liew (2016). The consequences encompass diminished job satisfaction, decreased work performance, and heightened absenteeism, all stemming from a deterioration in individual health (Razak, Yusof, Azidin, et al., 2014). According to Arrington (2008), one of the primary factors contributing to decreased employee performance is weariness and sleepiness resulting from work-related stress. Employees experiencing stress may exhibit reduced levels of concentration and motivation (in Mahadevan & Liew, 2016). Thus, work conditions encompass how the work environment accommodates and supports employees' performance (Ratnawat & Jha, 2014).

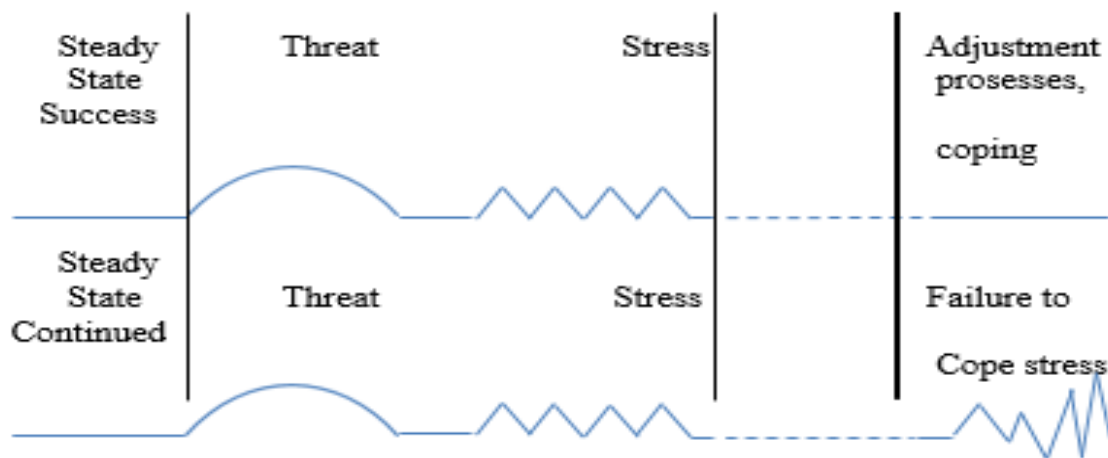
Overall, the issue of job-related stress is a significant global concern. Numerous empirical studies have provided evidence that job-related stress exerts a deleterious influence on employee performance, considering various factors, particularly emphasizing employee job satisfaction. A study by the University of Tehran also provides additional evidence of the significant relationship between occupational stress and employee performance. Therefore, engaging in purely library-based, this paper aims to systematically:

1. Explores the critical components aligned with Cooper's Stress Model (1988), including role conflict, work environment, and organizational issues
2. Investigates the influence of job stress on employee motivation, morale, and performance within the organizational setting
3. Examines the impact of environmental unpredictability on staff stress levels within the organization.

Literature Review

Work Stress Model

Cooper, Sloan, and Williams (1988) have remarked that stress is any force that puts psychological and physical factors beyond the level of individual ability. It means that obstacles that arise will result in pressure. Accordingly, each individual has different abilities and approaches, depending on the type of personality and the coping mechanism used. If one has not dealt with it, it will cause continuous and prolonged stress. It is because most individuals try to keep their emotions, thoughts, and relationships with the environment in check to be comfortable.



Cooper's Stress Model (Cooper, Sloan, and Williams, 1988).

Stress and Work Stress

According to Zehrer and Crotts (2012) in their study, stress is better understood from an individual's point of view as a cognitive interpretation that causes the situation to become stressful and indicates some difficult and uncomfortable conditions. Ergo, there is a stimulus that causes an inevitable reaction or response. This response or reaction is achieved through individual actions to deal with, manage, or respond to a stressful atmosphere or situation. Raja Maria Diana Raja Ali (2011) defines this pressure as a non-specific emotional response to real or imagined pressure. Stress occurs every day, and everyone experiences it. However, continuous and excessive stress can disrupt a person's mental or physical health. Azmi Mustafa (2005) continues with several conditions that lead to work stress. This situation is called a 'stressor' or cause. The causes are workload, time pressure, poor supervision quality, incompatibility of superiors compared to actual responsibilities, role conflicts, and different values between the organization, employees, and frustration.

Additionally, the study by Liley Afzani, Norsuraya, and Nur Azmina (2016) related to stress and emotional instability reported that 65% of employees stated that stress at work affects their physical and psychological abilities. Furthermore, more than 10% stated that stress at work would significantly impact individuals. Second, as many as 25% stated that the individual's career is the leading cause of their stress in life. Third is stress at work, which has a stronger connection with health problems than other problems, such as financial and family problems.

Therefore, the issue of dealing with stress in the workplace and the aspect of emotional instability that occurs becomes a problem in which, at this time, the employer's responsibility in the workplace is seen as very important to help employees reduce stress.

Work Performance

Mangkunegara (2009) defines work performance as the outcome of an employee's efforts in terms of both quality and quantity, reflecting their ability to fulfill assigned obligations (Mangkunegara, 2009, p. 67) in Iskanto (2021). According to Sutrisno's (2009, p. 151) findings, work performance can be understood as the outcome of an individual's work behavior throughout the execution of work-related tasks. Based on the expert's above definition, it can be inferred that work performance is the outcome of an individual's or employee's efforts in fulfilling assigned tasks in alignment with their responsibilities and roles, drawing upon their skills, experience, sincerity, and adherence to prescribed standards of time, quality, and quantity (Iskanto, 2021).

Job performance refers to the observable actions and behaviors exhibited by individuals in the workplace, with the outcome being a crucial factor in assessing their effectiveness in fulfilling their work responsibilities. Task awareness pertains to an individual's recognition of successful completion (Pradhan & Jena, 2017). Individual job performance refers to the measurable outcomes and achievements an individual exhibits within their responsibilities. It encompasses the tasks, duties, and responsibilities that an individual undertakes and the extent to which they effectively and efficiently fulfill these obligations. The impact of goal setting on employee work performance is significant, as the alignment of goals fosters motivation and facilitates collective progress, ultimately leading to sustained success (Kahora, 2012; Pantang, 2007). The concept of job performance refers to the effectiveness exhibited by individuals in executing duties that contribute to the technological core of the company (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997; Pradhan & Jena, 2017) in Ismail et al. (2022).

Furthermore, Rubin (2008) in Mahadevan & Liew (2016) added that job performance can be attributed to the interaction of three key factors: skill, effort, and work conditions. Skill refers to the knowledge, abilities, and competencies possessed by employees. Effort pertains to the level of motivation and dedication exerted by employees in completing their tasks. A company's ability to realize its mission and vision heavily depends on the performance of its employees. Hence, it is customary for the organization to possess a repertoire of instruments for evaluating employee performance at designated intervals (mid-year and year-end) to ascertain the extent to which predetermined objectives have been met within the specified time frame. Hence, Miruthula and Shanmugapriya (2023) have defined work performance as the degree to which employees fulfill their responsibilities per the company's established guidelines.

Discussion

Factors

Through the study of Nor Azah Abdul Aziz (2011), the factors that can cause stress can be divided into four main categories: factors found in oneself, psychological, biological, and social. Factors found in oneself are having ambitions or expectations too high for something, low self-esteem, a lack of self-confidence, fear of failure, comparison with others, and unfulfilled individual wishes. Psychological factors include personality type, tragedy, and the loss of loved ones. Biological factors include chronic physical diseases, changes in the body,

injuries, insufficient rest, and malnutrition. Social factors, on the other hand, are such things as moving house, marital conflict or divorce, stress at work such as heavy workloads, uncomfortable workplaces, types of work, a lack of appreciation, and a housing environment that has neighbors with problems and poor sanitation by Ministry of Health Malaysia (2005) in Firdaus, (2019). Additionally, Chetty et al. (2016) and Coetzer & Rothmann (2006) added that several factors, including the office environment and social contact, affect how well people perform (Ismail et al., 2022). Consequently, this paper discussed commonly significant factors aligned with the Cooper (1988) work stress model, including role conflict, work environment, and organizational factors.

Role Conflict

According to Nilufar, Zaini, and David (2009), role conflict can also cause stress. Conflict between roles will also occur if too many instructions are issued to individuals or employee representatives. In general, role conflict arises from conflicting work requirements between two or more roles (Biddle & Thomas, 1966; Rosman, 2007; Steven, Hang & Anita, 2001) in the study of Jezlily Jamaluddin (2011). Concurrently, Zainah and Hamdan (2002) agreed that the role in management is conceptualized as role ambiguity, role conflict, responsibility towards others, lack of responsibility, lack of support from management, lack of involvement in the decision-making process, and meeting rapid technological changes in Ganing et al. (2020).

As reported by Fatimah Abdullah (1985), role conflict is closely related to the source of conflict. Conflicting expectations arise due to the role expected of an individual outside his characteristics. Second, an individual will face conflicting expectations due to having two or more roles. Thirdly, an individual's relationship with others in the role set makes it possible to expect conflict. Fourth, conflict may arise because of conflicting definitions of what roles should be played, and fifth, conflict arises because of a lack of consensus between various roles. Previous studies have shown that professionals often face the dilemma of job commitment or role conflict. It is because the commitment of the organization and the commitment of the professionals often compete with each other (Rosman, 2007; Schroeder & Imdieke, 1997; Sorenson & Sorenson, 1974; Tubre & Collins, 2000) in Jezlily Jamaluddin's study (2011). However, poor working relationships between co-workers can contribute to job stress (Earnshaw & Cooper, 1996).

Eisenberg (1975), in Intan Nazni Mohd Asri's (2003) study, continued that the role of police officers in fighting criminal cases will cause role conflicts. Role conflict appears when an individual wants to maximize efficiency while carrying out responsibilities by acting reasonably to defend the law while ensuring that constitutional rights and fundamental freedoms are not violated. Edgerton (1977), in the same study, found that public school teachers in the United States had to perform two roles, namely as educators formally and informally. Teachers who hold the position of educators act as educators but play other roles, such as participating in other matters, such as the main task, and carrying out tasks, such as organizing a ceremony or event. Hence, an employee may experience stress due to role ambiguity, unclear roles, and role conflicts in organizations.

Work Environment

According to Zainah and Hamdan (2002), intrinsic factors in work include the work environment, such as demand for physical energy, repetitive tasks, and quantitative and qualitative work overload (in Ganing et al., 2020). Furthermore, Hapriza, Norulkamar, and Siti

Aishah (2005) agreed that the intrinsic elements of work include boredom, unmanaged workplace conditions, time pressure, and technical problems. The uncertainty of the environment will affect the design of the organizational structure; it also affects the stress level among the employees in the organization. Environmental factors consist of economic uncertainty, political uncertainty, and technological uncertainty. Economic uncertainty is causing a change in the business arena. When the economy fails, people become more worried about their lives. Sometimes, even a tiny downturn or recession can increase stress levels. Aligned with Robbins (2003), three types of environments can affect an individual's stress. Among them is technological uncertainty caused by rapid technological change. In contrast, economic and political uncertainty are the second and third environmental types. An example of economic uncertainty is the change in the business cycle, which contributes to economic uncertainty. When this situation occurs, it will cause employees and the public to want to know about the fate they will face in the future or their job security.

Rohany, Nasir, and Fatimah Omar (2006) affirmed that when employees experience conflict at work, this can affect their lives at home. The opposite will also happen. Therefore, employees who experience problems at home, such as family problems, life crises, financial problems, death, or relationship problems, are most likely unable to perform their duties well in the office. Based on a study by Osipow (1988), the physical environment has been defined as an extreme environmental condition that is the cause of an individual's stress. A noisy workplace, such as a hot work environment, can cause stress for an individual. Agreed to Rohany et. al (2006), Mohd Zaire (2014) supported that various factors within the work environment can be observed, including the physical setting of the workplace, interpersonal dynamics among colleagues, utilization of technology, organizational changes, alterations in time management, and the restructuring and reorganization of the organization. These changes can significantly impact the psychological and physiological well-being of individuals involved in the work setting.

Organizational Factors

Ariani (2023) in Kraja and Berberi (2023) stressed that performance is a construct influenced by many factors. Organizational structure and climate may limit employee autonomy. Employees may need more control over their jobs. They may feel that their job is tedious and unchallenging, contributing to job dissatisfaction, feelings of hurt, inferiority, and loss of identity. Employers can reduce this problem by increasing employee involvement in decision-making and encouraging teamwork to overcome employee control (Sapora Sipon, n.d.) in Ganing, Hasan, & Wan Hamzah (2020). In their study, Cooper and Marshall (1978) explained that weaknesses in communication relationships, opportunities, and power for employees in making decisions are among those identified as stress factors in the workplace. Many employees feel neglected or mistreated in decisions that may affect work. Cox, Boot, Cox, and Harrison (1988) explained that relationships and social support can be enhanced through social activities to reduce stress at work. Complex relationships with colleagues or administrators at work can be a source of stress for employees. Colleagues may need to gain skills in relationships and communication. This situation can cause them to show aggressive behavior, unwilling to help, and so on, which has a stressful effect on employees. Relationships can also become negative due to office politics, competition, and workplace harassment.

Relationship Between Stress, Work Stress and Performance

Multiple studies have demonstrated that job stress has a detrimental impact on employee performance, considering many parameters, particularly emphasizing employee job

satisfaction. Research by Ahmed and Ramzan (2013) has established a negative association between job stress and employee performance. A study comparable to the current investigation shed light on the significant role that factors like workload, role conflict, and inadequate monetary compensation play as primary sources of stress that harm employee performance.

Moreover, Jeyarai (2013) conducted a study examining the effects of occupational stress on teachers. The findings revealed that stress leads to increased absenteeism, a higher likelihood of quitting, and a decreased inclination to pursue a career in teaching. Hence, a negative correlation exists between occupational stress and teachers' professional engagement. The link between these two entities has been a subject of significant debate and disagreement within scholarly circles. However, there is a notable variation in outcomes across various organizational contexts. Additionally to Mead's (2000), there is a discernible negative effect on employee performance when job stress is not effectively controlled. Therefore, the presence of stress has a detrimental effect on production and organizational functioning (in Fonkeng, 2018). Maneze (2005) in the same study urged that many firms often perceive job-related stress as a relatively minor concern. However, it is crucial to recognize that this type of stress can significantly impact an individual's health, directly influencing their performance. Consequently, the increasing prevalence of job-related stress has emerged as a significant obstacle for employers, as it diminishes job performance, leads to a rise in absenteeism, and contributes to employee engagement in substance abuse, especially drugs and alcoholism.

Consequently, researchers have identified four types of relationships between stress and performance: curvilinear, negative, positive, and no link (Jamal, 1984). Limited research studies indicate that stress positively impacts employee motivation and improves job performance. It suggests the presence of a positive correlation between stress and job performance (Salami, 2010). According to Robert's 1908 study, a curvilinear relationship between stress and performance suggests that employees with moderate anxiety levels can perform better. A study was conducted at the University of Tehran to examine the correlation between occupational stress and job performance. According to Mohsen Keshavarz (2011), many employees commonly encounter elevated levels of job-related stress. According to Ali (2011), Ali (2018), Ali and Bibi (2017), and Ali and Khmad (2014) in, Usmani et al. (2022) have all made the case for a positive association between job stress and job performance. A study examining the impact of job strain on teachers' performance in a private college demonstrates the relationship between stress, the reward system, and its positive influence on teacher efficiency. Syed Saad Hussain Shah et al. (2012) added that the influence of rewards as a stress element significantly impacts instructors' performance.

In Hien, Huyen, and Hoang's study (2023), Luthans (1995) urged that job stress can be expected when job demands surpass individuals' ability to respond effectively. Stress at work harms employees' well-being (Karimi et al., 2014; Lu et al., 2003). In contrast, when employees experience a sense of happiness, they are more likely to develop favorable perceptions, decreasing work-related stress. Although workplace stress overshadows the generally positive effects of happiness on employee performance (Wright & Cropanzano, 2000; Bogdanova et al., 2008; Taris & Schreurs, 2009), it is still a factor. Hence, it is imperative for managers to give due consideration to the various aspects that impact the psychological well-being of their staff (Grant et al., 2007). Taris and Schreurs (2009) suggest that enhancing employees' perceptions of happiness positively impacts their work performance. Several studies conducted by Bashir and Ramay (2010), Yurtkorub (2013), Arshadi and Damiri (2013), and Hoboubi et al. (2017) have shown evidence that work-related stress has detrimental effects on employees'

performance. An elevated degree of stress is associated with a diminished capacity for employees to perform their professional tasks. According to Hien, Huyen, and Hoang's study from 2023, previous research (Chang & Chang, 2007; Shahu & Gole, 2008; Badar, 2011) has extensively documented the detrimental effects of this phenomenon on people's ability to perform at work.

According to studies by Ram, Khoso, Shah et al. (2011), Kinyita (2015), and Yunita and Saputra (2019) in Saleem, Malik, & Qureshi (2021), stress is the main factor impeding employees' performance. The impact of stress on individuals' psychological, behavioral, and physiological well-being has been seen and documented (Musyoka et al., 2012). The detrimental effects of this phenomenon on employee motivation, morale, and performance inside the workplace are evident. Furthermore, a detrimental correlation exists between this factor and the amount of job satisfaction, which hampers an individual's motivation to engage in work activities and subsequently leads to diminished performance outcomes (Ram et al., 2011). The personnel experiencing high stress levels encounter adverse health outcomes and negative work experiences within the organizational setting in Saleem et al. (2021). This phenomenon diminishes their cognitive capacity to focus on tasks, declining overall performance. The detrimental impact of work-related stress on the mental and physical well-being of workers poses a significant risk to their overall health, potentially leading to impaired cognitive functioning, temporary memory impairment, and, in extreme circumstances, compromised ability to retrieve information and diminished focus on given tasks (Al-Hawajreh, 2011).

Conclusion

Thoroughly among the prominent work stress related to role conflict, work environment, and organizational issues identified by Cooper's Stress Model, this paper significantly influences employee motivation, morale, and performance within the organizational setting. This is because when all the coming factors become threats to workers, it results in stress towards their coping mechanisms, whether they could adjust to or if a failure occurs. In relation to work performance, this study has recognized certain crucial factors and considered them further within the study. Many personal competency factors influence employee performance, which numerous researchers have investigated and characterized. Therefore, elevated stress levels within a work environment can harm an individual's safety and well-being, manifesting in psychological and physiological diseases. Extended periods of disruption can significantly impact the productivity levels of individuals within an organization and on a national scale. All employees must address issues of emotions and stress in the workplace to mitigate adverse effects on individuals, their families, organizations, and the broader society. The need for further exploration is significant for a better work environment and surroundings in the future.

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