Optimizing Organizational Performance: The Vital Role of Workplace Stress Management among Public Servants

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Abstract

Despite growing recognition of the detrimental effects of workplace stress on employee well-being and organisational outcomes, there remains a gap in understanding the specific strategies and interventions required for effective stress management among employees to enhance organisational performance. This study analyzes the vital role of workplace stress management practices and organizational performance in the public sector. It identifies key factors influencing the government's employee stress levels and their subsequent impact on organisational outcomes in Pejabat Setiausaha Kerajaan Negeri Selangor (SUK). The study's theoretical model is based on the Transactional Model (Cognitive Appraisal) by Lazarus & Folkman (1984). To address the research questions, three objectives were formulated: first, to assess employees' comprehension of the importance of workplace stress management in organisational performance; second, to pinpoint the factors contributing to workplace stress experienced by employees; and third, to explore the influence of employees' stress management on organisational performance. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to employees, and 128 staff members participated in the study. Descriptive statistical approaches were used to analyse the data. The findings indicate a strong awareness among respondents regarding the significance of managing workplace stress. Additionally, the research revealed that poor management practices are the primary contributors to workplace stress. Lastly, employees believe effectively managing their stress will improve organisational performance. This study also provided better insight for academicians and public sector management to establish new knowledge; to further appreciate the effects of stress, workplace stress management, and organisational performances. Extending the research to other public sectors in Malaysia is recommended for better cognisance.

Keywords: *Stress, Workplace Stress Management, Organizational Performances, Public Servant, Public Sector.*

Mengoptimumkan Prestasi Organisasi: Kepentingan Pengurusan Tekanan dalam kalangan Pekerja di Sektor Awam

Abstrak

Kajian lalu telah membuktikan kesan buruk tekanan di tempat kerja terhadap kesejahteraan diri pekerja dan hasil organisasi namun masih terdapat jurang dalam memahami strategi dan intervensi khusus yang diperlukan untuk pengurusan tekanan yang berkesan dalam kalangan pekerja untuk meningkatkan prestasi organisasi. Kajian ini melihat kepentingan pengurusan tekanan dalam kalangan pekerja di sektor awam serta mengenal pasti faktor-faktor utama yang mempengaruhi tahap tekanan pekerja dan kesannya terhadap hasil organisasi di Pejabat Setiausaha Kerajaan Negeri Selangor (SUK). Model teori kajian ini berdasarkan Model Transaksional (Penilaian Kognitif) oleh Lazarus & Folkman (1984). Untuk menjawab soalan penyelidikan, tiga objektif telah dirumuskan: pertama, untuk menilai pemahaman pekerja tentang kepentingan pengurusan tekanan di tempat kerja dalam meningkatkan prestasi organisasi; kedua, untuk mengenal pasti faktor-faktor yang menyumbang kepada tekanan di tempat kerja; dan ketiga, untuk menilai pengaruh pengurusan tekanan pekerja terhadap prestasi organisasi. Soal selidik telah diedarkan kepada pekerja di SUK, Shah Alam dan sebanyak 128 kakitangan memberikan maklum balas terhadap kajian ini. Seterusnya, statistik deskriptif digunakan untuk menganalisis data. Penemuan menunjukkan kesedaran yang tinggi dalam kalangan peserta mengenai kepentingan mengurus tekanan di tempat kerja. Selain itu, kajian ini mendedahkan bahawa amalan pengurusan yang lemah adalah penyumbang utama kepada tekanan di tempat kerja. Akhir sekali, pekerja percaya bahawa pengurusan tekanan yang berkesan akan meningkatkan prestasi organisasi. Kajian ini telah memberikan input yang berguna kepada ahli akademik dan pihak pengurusan organisasi awam tentang pengurusan tekanan di tempat kerja dan kesannya terhadap prestasi organisasi. Hasil kajian diharap menambah pengetahuan dan kefahaman baharu dalam kalangan pengurus organisasi di sektor awam.

Kata Kunci: *Tekanan, Pengurusan Tekanan di Tempat Kerja, Prestasi Organisasi, Pekerja Sektor Awam, Sektor Awam,*

Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic, stress was a major contributor to the rise in operational costs for global corporate businesses, affecting both employees' health and companies' profits, particularly for employees of government institutions (A.D. Kaye, 2021). The decisions made by the ruling government to impose, end, and re-impose lockdowns or movement control orders (MCO) since March 2020 saw the closure of

nonessential businesses, the banning of public gatherings, and the requirement to work from home. These were seen as contributors to the increase in employees' mental health issues. Government employees are experiencing a significant shift in employees way of work. Studies have reported that government employees are clocking more hours beyond the normal work schedule (N. D. Mohd Mahudin, N. I. A. Zaabar, 2021, Market Connections,2020), leading to a decline in job satisfaction and negative feelings about working in the public sector. These experiences while working from home have resulted in government employees feeling burnt out (Barrett, K., & Greene, K. (2020), creating thoughts of quitting jobs. Burnout is especially notable for employees who feel anxious due to a lack of information about the pandemic and post-pandemic work strategy (Alexander A. et al, 2021).

Based on the above statement, stress is imminent in modern living, and its presence can be positive and negative (Arnold, 2018). Stress requires the adrenaline rush to encourage intense efforts and manage issues and obstacles simultaneously. On the other hand, it also reduces an individual's bodily and psychological energy (Amiri, 2019). This study aims to understand how the public servants in SUK, Selangor, have been subjected to deep changes characterised by organisational commitment, which were affected by stress, organisational performances and job satisfaction during the pandemic.   According to scholars Meyer & Allen, 1991 Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974), organisational commitment is related to the employees' psychological attachment to their organisations.   and leads to prolonged organisation membership (Allen and Meyer, 1990), (Ida Harlina Ikhwan Nasir, Norshafizah Hanafi, and Bidayatul Akmal Mustafa Kamil, 2022; Mete, Sökmen & Biyik, 2016). Furthermore, it could also affect the organisation's turnover, behaviour, and performance.

Based on a study by Jetha et al (2017), workplace stress is defined as the reaction that humans may have when employees put up with deliverables that are not suited with expertise and capability, which can be seen as challenging to some. Workplace stress can be caused by poor work organization such as work systems, design; such as lack of control on work processes, management issues, unsatisfactory working conditions and lack of support from colleagues and supervisors (Hanisch, 2016). While workplace stress, stigma and attitudes towards employees suffering from stress or mental illness have been researched, it still remains an often neglected aspect across different industries and countries, globally (Joyce, 2016). It is important to have an awareness

on the differences between stress in general and workplace stress so that this problem can be addressed accordingly.

To curb workplace stress, it is important for organizations to explain thoroughly to any companies employees regarding job description, roles, responsibilities, organization policies, and guidelines, and the goals of the organizations, to help them set clear objectives for organization performances. Superiors also need to pay more attention to tasks given to employees to reduce work stress and the need to have proper and clear instructions when delivering the tasks (Nurul Ezali Alias et al. 2019). It is crucial for organizations to understand and engage in workplace stress management, to cope with workplace stress problems and successfully manage stress among employees.

Stress management is any program that reduces stress by understanding the stress response, recognizing stressors, and using coping techniques to minimize stressors. Coping techniques refer to thought or behaviour patterns that neutralize stressors or establish resistance to negative stress outcomes (Haus, 2016). Stress Management encompasses techniques intended to equip a person with effective coping mechanisms for dealing with psychological stress. The importance given to stress management skills in the workplace can be guessed from the fact that employers have been burdened with a responsibility of recognizing and coping with the workplace stress to ensure good mental and physical health of employees in organization (Iyi, 2016).

Accordingly, organizational commitment transpires to be the most essential focus for research amongst academicians and administrators owing to the claim that the level of performance will be affected if the skill of employees (Ida Harlina Ikhwan Nasir, Norshafizah Hanafi, and Bidayatul Akmal Mustafa Kamil, 2022). Mirela (2018) stated that workplace stress is starting to get attention and concern from employers because it has significant implications for the organization. Although some stress is a normal part of life, excessive stress can influence one's productivity, health, and emotions and it has to be taken under control (Keshavarz, 2017). When employees lose confidence, it leads to attitude to refuse to take responsibility, quickly get irritated, and feel unsatisfied with their job (Baird, 2019).

In this study, researchers adapt the theoretical model based on the Cognitive Theory, which explained on how stressful situations as follows (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, 1987, including person-related factors

(such as beliefs, self-esteem) and environmental factors (such as demands, constraints) are initial influences that impact the intermediary processes of stress evaluations and coping strategies (Navarro-Mateu, 2020). The researchers also mentioned that the transactional model of stress and coping can explain how positive situations can still trigger a stress response that leads to positive emotions. This is because positive situations still require a person to use their coping abilities (Lim et al. 2023). Researchers formulated several hypotheses. Researchers concluded that workplace stress could affect organizational performance if employees face stress at their workplace. As such, employees who face difficulties at their workplace might lose interest in getting their job done, ultimately affecting their health and their ability to discharge their responsibilities to their best level (Baird et al, 2019). This in the end will lead to poor job and organizational performance. Therefore, the ability to manage stress can make a difference between job performance's success or failure.

Research Objectives

The study analyzes the significance of workplace stress management among employees and its impact on organizational performance. The objectives outlined below are tailored to address the issues raised in the problem statements:

1. To assess employees' comprehension of the importance of workplace stress management in organizational performance.
2. To pinpoint the factors contributing to workplace stress experienced by employees.
3. To explore the influence of employees' stress management on organizational performance.

Literature Review

Nowadays, stress may affect anyone regardless of their age, gender, and employment position. Workplace stress is common for many professions. While some stress is a normal part of work, excessive stress or high levels of stress over prolonged periods of time can interfere with an employee's productivity and have serious implications for the physical and emotional health of the person (Houtman, 2017). It is beneficial for employees to be aware of employees own stress levels and take it as an important step towards the prevention of stress in order to increase productivity.

Additionally, it has been discovered by researchers that employees and employers did not realize that workplace stress directly lead to the failure of organizational performance (Omisore, 2017). Poor stress management can lead to the failure of job and organizational performance. This is because employees   can no longer afford to do the work as usual and this was said to be a challenge to the ability to be productive as usual. According to Sikuku et al. (2017), organisational stress leads to low employee productivity, hence has greater consequences to an organisation's goals and objectives. The performance of every organization depends on the ability of its employees to work efficiently and effectively in a stress free and conducive work environment to achieve organizational goals (Bodziany et al, 2017). According to Kundaragi (2016), certain policies implemented at the workplace are not effectively administered to balance employees' work life and led to employees' stress. A prolonged stress can result to poor mental and physical health among employees which impedes work performance and productivity. Therefore, this research is aimed at investigating the effect of employee's stress management towards organizational performance.

As stated by Segal et al in 2016, it is normal for the employees to face workplace stress. However, with excessive stress, employees' productivity can be interfered with and may impact negatively on the employees' physical and emotional health. The employees' ability in managing the workplace stress can be seen from the improvement in employees' productivity and the organizational performance's success or failure. Workplace stress has a significant effect on the performance and service delivery of workers (Ngari et al, 2016). Workplace stress has been recognized worldwide as a major challenge to employees' health and organization's performance. Employees' that are stressed usually tend to be unhealthy, poorly motivated, less productive and less safe at the workplace because they tend to focus less when working. When the employees are stressed, their organizations are less likely to be successful in a competitive market (Cox et al, 2015).

In addition to the above, Vishal (2016) states that the workplace environment could be extremely tense when employees experience high level of stress at work. Overall business performance will be affected when employees have high levels of stress. Vishal (2016) also mentioned that employees' psychological health will determine the achievement of improvements in organizational performance. Furthermore, when employees' experience workplace stress, it will be

challenging for them to maintain their health level and for the organization's management to maintain the safety and health of their employees and the organization itself (Chew, 2015). Subsequently, unhealthy organizations, will result in lower level employees productivity and it may not only affect organizational performance but also the quality of output for the greater market (Okeyo, 2016).

The pandemic phase has caused fear, stress, anxiety (Sundarasen et al. 2020), and economic instability (Cavallo & Forman 2020) around the world. Several factors, including leadership styles (Al Khajeh 2018; Wahab et al. 2014; Ibrahim et al. 2016), economic instability, security, working conditions (Royer 2010) and stress level (Khuong & Yen 2016), influence the performance of academic staff during change implementations. Transformation of the traditional workplace into virtual organizations has created stress among staff members that could harm their productivity, performance, and satisfaction (Gigauri 2020; Anderson 2020). Stress during the pandemic is a crucial occupational issue (Sahni 2020), and its negative impact on job performance has warranted managing stress for sustainable performance. Stress management is essential for consistent performance, and leaders are expected to help staff members cope with stress during uncertain situations (Jyoti & Bhau (2015). The role of leaders influences workplace stress. Supportive leadership behaviours help subordinates manage stress and deal with ambiguous situations (Abbasi 2015). Moreover, stress management training programs enable individuals to shift the mindset (Jamieson et al. 2018) by being mindful about the current situation rather than reacting emotionally. A "stress optimism mindset" can be developed to positively manage stress level (Crum et al. 2017). Meanwhile, employment insecurity due to the economic crisis during and after the pandemic was observed as a potential stressor (Giorgi et al. 2020; Pacheco et al. 2020; Gasparro et al. 2020; Zhou et al. 2020; Wilson et al. 2020) that has adversely affected employees' wellbeing (Pacheco et al. 2020) and productivity.

Stress and anxiety during an infectious disease outbreak warrant considerable attention. The community response to an epidemic follows a pattern in which anxiety is highest and behavioral responses are more intense at the beginning of an epidemic (Gaygisiz et al., 2012). Understanding the association between *psychobehavioural* responses and anxiety during the early phase of the epidemic is important to provide information for timely public health intervention (Leung et al., 2003).

According to The Transactional Model (Cognitive Appraisal) developed by Lazarus and Folkman in 1984, as referred by Joko (2017), stress involves two processes which are the production of stressors by the environment, and the response or reaction of an individual to the stressors. These two processes of stress have led Lazarus and Folkman to come out with the model of Cognitive Appraisal (Sincero, 2012). This model emphasizes the result of stress in the environment where there is an imbalance between what the situation demands and what the person possesses in relation to those demands. Lazarus and Folkman stated that stress usually does not occur from the source of the stress, but it happens due to an individual's incompetence in serving orders. Hence, stress management relates highly to the capacity of a person to utilize their own resources in order to manage stress (Sincero, 2012).
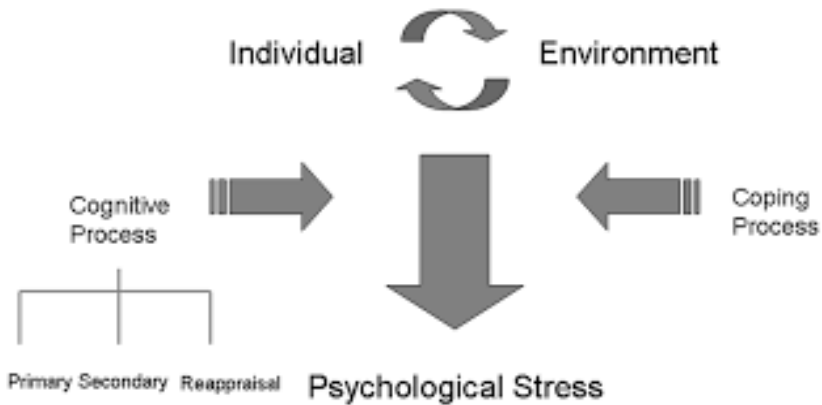

Figure 2.1: The Transactional Model (Cognitive Appraisal)

The proposed model posits that the outcome of a stressful experience is shaped by cognitive appraisal and coping processes. These processes involve assessing the significance of the situation (primary appraisal), evaluating coping resources (secondary appraisal), and adapting strategies based on changing circumstances (reappraisal). Emotional regulation plays a crucial role in transitioning from appraisal to coping mechanisms. The model underscores the interplay between personal and situational factors in shaping cognitive appraisals. Stress is conceptualized as a dynamic process involving stressors, appraisals, strain, and coping efforts, challenging the notion of stress as a fixed phenomenon (Roncaglia, 2014).

Materials and Method

A total of 28 questions have been designed by researchers in the questionnaire set. The questionnaire is measured using a five-point Likert-scale of 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neutral, 2=Disagree and 1=Strongly Disagree. The collected data was analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 24. Independent variables consist of (1) the level of employees' understanding on the importance of workplace stress management, (2) factors that lead to workplace stress and (3) effects of stress management towards organizational performance. Questions are designed based on the research objectives and variables of this study. The dependent variable of this study is the organization's performance success or failure when employees use proper or improper techniques to manage their workplace stress.

The study required a sample size of 74 respondents, determined using a rule of thumb formula proposed by S. B. Green in 1991, which states that the sample size formula is n = 50 + 8(m) where m is the number of predictors (Green, 1991). In this case, with 3 predictors, the formula yielded a minimum sample size of 74 (n > 50 + 8(3) = 74). However, the researcher successfully recruited 128 representatives to participate in the study. These participants were staff members from SUK Selangor, comprising 31 males (24.2%) and 97 females (75.8%).

The level of employee rating scale measured by mean score was determined by the equation which was adapted from (Landell, 1997) and also applied by several authors (Arabiyat,2011; Awajan, 2010; Azman, Silva, Samah, Man, & Shaffril, 2013; Pihie & Bagheri, 2012; Saari & Rashid, 2013; Wimolmas, 2013):

Interval width = maximum point - minimum point/number of levels
Interval Width = 5 -1 / 3 = 1.33
low level = 1 to 2.33
Moderate level = 2.34 to 3.67
High level = 3.68 to 5

Figure 3.1: Level of an employee rating scale

Findings and Discussion

The level of understanding of the importance of workplace stress management among employees towards organizational performance

Table 4.1: Level of understanding

No	Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
1	I realized that it is important to manage workplace stress properly.	128	4.41	.901	High
2	I understand that, with proper workplace stress management, employees will be more productive.	128	4.34	.907	High
3	I acknowledge that, with proper workplace stress management, it will help in performance appraisals of employees.	128	4.34	.872	High
4	I am aware that improper workplace stress management can lead to poor organizational performance.	128	4.33	.852	High
5	I understand that workplace stress management is important for all employees.	128	4.29	.862	High
6	I understand that workplace stress can directly affect organizational performance.	128	4.29	.862	High
7	I am aware that there are several factors that may lead to workplace stress.	128	4.27	.900	High
8	I am well informed that workplace stress may occur to everyone regardless of their age and gender.	128	4.27	.911	High
	Total Mean		**4.32**	**.795**	**High**

Findings indicated a high level of understanding of the importance of workplace stress management among employees, ranked first *(M: 4.32, SD: 0.795)*. These findings show that employees understand the importance of stress management to their organization's performance.

In addition, the item indicates "I realized that it is important to manage workplace stress properly" ranked the highest *(M: 4.41, SD: 0.901)*. This is due to the realization that the level of stress in the organization needs to be managed appropriately.

Besides that, the item mentioned that with proper workplace stress management, employees will become more productive *(M: 4.34, SD: 0.907)* and the item indicates proper workplace stress management can help employees in performance appraisal *(M: 4.34, SD: 0.872)* is ranked second and third. These findings show that the employee feels that implementing good and proper stress management procedures in their company will benefit both the employee and the employer with more productivity and a good performance appraisal.

Based on the analysis it's proven that it is important for employers to understand their employees, especially in regards to workplace stress and how to manage it. As evidenced by the research by Kaur & Gautam (2016) stress management programs are required due to the increased dangers of experiencing stress under which it becomes difficult for an employee to handle and cope with work. It also suggests that the organization should understand that they ought to share the burden and spend on stress management programs to ensure they can maximize their profit, which in return might also help in generating satisfaction among employees (Dhruba Lal Pandey) 2020.

Factors that lead to workplace stress among employees.

Table 4.2: Factors that lead to workplace stress among employees.

No	Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
1	I realize that bad management practices will leads to workplace stress among employees.	128	4.38	.805	High
2	I realized that work overload is one of the factors that leads to workplace stress among employees.	128	4.34	.881	High
3	I understand that a negative workplace relationship will lead to workplace stress among employees.	128	4.34	.872	High

4	I notice that a poor working environment will leads to workplace stress among employees.	128	4.32	.878	High
5	I realize that unpleasant working conditions will leads to workplace stress among employees.	128	4.31	.867	High
6	I notice that role conflict will lead to workplace stress among employees.	128	4.30	.883	High
7	I feel that time pressures will lead to workplace stress among employees.	128	4.27	.856	High
8	I feel that poor communication in the workplace will leads to workplace stress among employees.	128	4.26	.816	High
9	I understand that long working hours will lead to workplace stress among employees.	128	4.25	.964	High
10	I feel that lack of resources and equipment will leads to workplace stress among employees.	128	4.08	.952	High
	Total Mean		4.28	.743	High

Based on the findings, the items listed above was found to relate to workplace stress among employees by showing a high level of indication *(M: 4.28, SD: 0.743).* Among the top factors, the findings show that bad management practices lead to workplace stress among employees *(M: 4.38, SD: 0.805),* which ranked first. These findings indicate that they believe that bad management practices are a significant factor contributing to workplace stress, with relatively consistent agreement among participants. this statement is based on their experiences and observations of how management behaviors impact their daily work environment and well-being (Wang et al, 2020)

In addition, it was found that work overload *(M: 4.34, SD: 0.881)* and negative workplace relationships *(M: 4.34, SD: 0.872)* were among the other factors leading to workplace stress. Employees recognize work overload as a significant factor contributing to workplace stress due to the excessive demands, time constraints, health impacts, impact on the quality of work, disruption of work-life balance, and perceived lack of

control over their workload. These factors collectively contribute to employees' realization that work overload is a major source of stress in the workplace (Wang et al, 2020).

The effects of employee's stress management towards organizational performance.

Table 4.3: The effects of employee's stress management towards organizational performance.

No	Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
1	When employees are able to manage their stress, a positive outcome towards organizational performance can be achieved.	128	4.45	.782	High
2	Well manage of workplace stress will increase organizational performance.	128	4.36	.791	High
3	Proper workplace stress management will bring positivity in organizations.	128	4.36	.781	High
4	Unhealthy employees will affect the quality of productivity that they produce in the organizations.	128	4.29	.843	High
5	Inappropriate techniques in managing employees' workplace stress will directly lead to the failure of organizational performance.	128	4.26	.890	High
6	Workplace stress may increase employee turnover.	128	4.25	.896	High
7	When employees manage to deal with their stress, it will indirectly increase the organizational productivity and profitability.	128	4.24	.839	High
8	Improper workplace stress management may reduce efficiency in organization operations.	128	4.22	.930	High
9	The failure to manage workplace stress might lead to reduction of organizational profitability.	128	4.18	.909	High

10	Improper workplace stress management may increase the expenditure of health costs of employees.	128	4.16	.894	High
	Total Mean		4.28	.736	High

In this study items related to the effects of stress management on organizational performance indicated a high level of correlation *(M: 4.34, SD: 0.872)*. It was found that when employees are able to manage their stress, accordingly a positive outcome toward organizational performance can be achieved *(M: 4.45, SD: 0.782)*. This item received the highest level indication and is ranked first. The result shows that employees strongly believed that the outcome of employee stress management can lead to organizational performance achievement.

Moreover, respondents stated that proper workplace stress management will bring positivity to organizations *(M: 4.36, SD: 0.781)* and manageable workplace stress can increase organization performance *(M: 4.36, SD: 0.791)*. These two items are ranked second and third respectively. Based on this result, it shows that respondents believed if proper stress management was practiced efficiently in their organization employees can contribute to organizational overall performance. As stated by Mai Ngoc Khuong and Vu Hai Yen (2016), by recognizing and understanding the fundamental and essential roles of these working factors, the managers of those organizations should pay more attention to care about reducing employees' stress, as a way to increase employees' performance in order to contribute to the increase in organization's productivity. This finding were proven through their research work involving six different industries at Dong Xuyen Industrial Zone, Ba Ria – Vung Tau province, Vietnam.

As mentioned by Baird (2019), when employees face a stressful working environment it can affect organizational performance. Hence, managing stress can make a lot of difference in organizational performance. Stress management can help employees improve their work productivity and

work can be done smoothly, which indirectly will help increase organizational performance (Mariam, 2016).
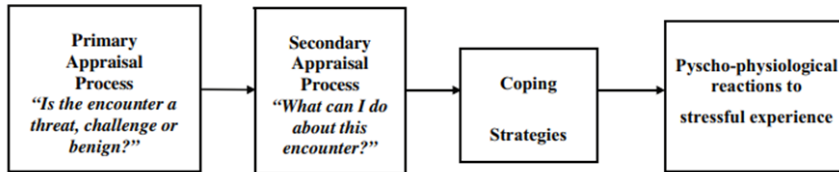
Conclusion

| Primary Appraisal Process "Is the encounter a threat, challenge or benign?" | → | Secondary Appraisal Process "What can I do about this encounter?" | → | Coping

Strategies | → | Pyscho-physiological reactions to stressful experience |

Figure 5.1: The Transactional Model (Cognitive Appraisal) Framework Developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984).

The results of this research found that the primary appraisal is identified as the factors that lead to workplace stress among employees. These factors exist in the workplace itself, ranging from poor working environment, lack of relationship between employees and employers, and lack of communication. All these negative factors contribute to workplace stress and worse, employees themselves are left to consider whether all these causes are threats, challenges, or harm-loss. Subsequent to this, researchers construct the first research objective; 'To identify factors that lead to workplace stress among employees', and the second objective 'Factors that lead to workplace stress' for this research.

The secondary appraisal is initiated to gather additional information, assess the situation, and determine which coping options are available. Secondary appraisal involves dealing with the stressor, looking at whether the individual manages to apply the strategy effectively or vice versa. Positive secondary appraisal happens when that individual think positively about the stressor. That same individual also always believes that he or she will succeed in dealing with something and always convinces themselves that they can do that by chanting phrases like "I can do it" and others. That positive vibes will bring positive results. Meanwhile, statements like "I cannot do this, I know I will fail" or "I will not do it because everyone does not believe that I can " will bring negative results and negative secondary appraisal.

As in this research, the secondary appraisal is being analysed by the level of understanding on the importance of workplace stress management among employees. When employees understand all factors that lead to workplace stress, they will immediately know how to

avoid themselves from experiencing workplace stress. For example, a lack of engagement between employees and employers. Therefore, to lessen workplace stress among employees, both employees and employers must find suitable ways or solutions to improve if not fix their relationship. Hence, the decision to set the research objective as 'To analyse the level of understanding of the importance of workplace stress management among employees towards organizational performance' and the use of 'Level of employees' understanding on the importance of stress management' as the variables.

"Coping" in the framework above is the result of the appraisal process. As stated by Rao (2016), stress management refers to the variety of techniques, methods, and procedures for handling stress. Coping is a method of managing stress. In this research, the researcher set 'Stress management' as one of the variables. As mentioned above, in order to improve relationships among employees and employers, both of them have to find suitable ways to improve or fix their relationship. For example, employers must be more friendly to employees and become more approachable. It is important to manage stress properly and that is the reason why researchers have chosen stress management as one of the research variables.

Finally, psycho-physiological is the outcomes and effects of coping or stress management techniques. There will be two different terms for measuring outcomes using this model which are short-term and long-term depending on the coping options chosen. In this research, the researchers intended to see the outcomes of stress management on organizational performance. The projected outcomes are whether employees' success in managing their stress will improve the organizational performance or will it bring failure to the organizational performance. The researchers set 'To investigate the effects of employee's stress management towards organizational performance' as one of their research objectives and 'Effects of stress management towards organizational performance' as the variable.

Based on the previous findings, Sur (2014) explained that employees will experience workplace stress when there is an imbalance between the demands of the work environment and the employees' abilities or when employees are expected to do more than they can. Therefore, workplace stress will be an indicator for the employees that they have reached a certain limit of stress and that they cannot cope with that stress level anymore. Workplace stress may be due to ambiguity, conflict, and work overload that employees experience in their workplace (Sur, 2014).

According to the Health and Safety Executive (2001), as cited by Leca (2015), stress is a reaction that arises in individuals when they worry about the inability to manage experiencing excessive pressure and demands placed on them. Almost all work conditions can lead to stress among employees, depending on employees' reaction toward the condition. Foregone employees will accept a network procedure and feel little or no stress, while another employee experiences overwhelming pressure from the same task (Saravanan, 2017). Workplace stress can be in terms of psychological, physical, or social external harmful factors in the work environment (Greenberg et al, 2017).

Other than a lack of resources, work overload also leads to workplace stress (Raza, 2017). This is supported by Keshavarz (2017) and Alias (2019). According to Keshavarz (2017), workload means the amount of work that an individual has to finish within a given period. In other words, work overload occurs when employees have lots of responsibilities in their workplace at a given time and they cannot handle it (Ali et al, 2017). This statement is then supported by Idris (2015), stating that workplace stress occurs when employees have a mentality that says that they are unable to complete tasks assigned to them accordingly. The employees are sceptical or unconfident in their own abilities to do certain amounts of work which lead them to experience stress at their workplace. Many researchers believe that work overload causes increased stress in the workplace (Alias, 2019) since some employees cannot cope with a heavy workload to complete within a short time. Other than that, workload is associated with many types of negative outcomes. For example, excessive workload leads to anxiety, fatigue, headache, gastrointestinal problems, and in worst situations, can lead to death (Abbasi, 2016). Based on the analysis, during the pandemic, employees were required to attend to a high number of clients online as well as physically, all of whom may react differently given the changes made in service delivery. In many cases, too, limited resources (e.g., Internet connection, organizational communication, office guidelines, etc.) and uncertainty about the COVID-19 disease itself can turn the issue into a logistical problem. All these aspects may then exhaust an employee's energy to the extent that recovery becomes impossible.

Poor working relationships are another factor that causes workplace stress (Khuong, 2016). This statement is supported by Nekoranec (2019), Harith (2016) and Thanh (2016). Poor working relationships can lead to workplace stress because the relationship between employee and their peers and supervisors is a main aspect of an employee's link to the company (Thanh, 2016). Other than that, employees' behaviours are

also affected by the way their supervisors manage them. With less support and ineffective communication from the supervisors or peers, employees will feel alienated, which in turn will lead to decreased pace of work and performance (Nekoranec, 2016). When organizations practice effective communication between employees and their supervisors, good relationships between employees and their supervisors and the employees can be maintained, providing clearer direction to achieve the goals and objectives of the organizations (Ipsen, 2018). Supervisors can treat their employees' needs and problems when there are open lines of communication. For example, open-door policy, which means, communication between two persons directly, without going through a third party (Thanh, 2016). According to Newton (2015), support from supervisors is essential because it can help reduce workplace stress among employees and will help them to not only complete their work but also achieve the organization's goals. Therefore, if employees do not receive sufficient support from supervisors, they could feel stressed out. This is because they will feel alone and they feel that no one understands what they are experiencing. When they are lonely, their performance and pace of work will tend to decrease (Newton, 2015).

Effects of stress management towards organizational performance.

As stated by Segal et al in 2016, it is normal for employees to face workplace stress. However, with excessive stress, employees' productivity can be interfered with and may impact negatively on the employees' physical and emotional health. The employees' ability to manage workplace stress can be seen in the improvement in employees' productivity and the organizational performance's success or failure. Workplace stress has a significant effect on the performance and service delivery of workers (Ngari et al, 2016). Workplace stress has been recognized worldwide as a major challenge to employees' health and the healthiness of their organizations. Employees who are stressed usually tend to be unhealthy, poorly motivated, less productive, and less safe at the workplace because they are likely to focus less while working. When the employees are stressed, their organizations are less likely to be successful in a competitive market (Cox et al, 2015).

As mentioned by Vishal (2016), the workplace environment could become extremely tense when employees experience high levels of stress at their workplace. Overall business performance will be affected when employees have high levels of stress due to the fact that employees' psychological health determines the results of organizational

performance, recording improvements or otherwise. Furthermore, when employees experience workplace stress, it will be challenging for them to remain healthy and for the organization's management to maintain the health, safety and well-being of their employees and the organization itself (Chew, 2015). In unhealthy organizations, the employees may not give the best productivity for their organizations, and it may not only affect their organizational performance but also the level of productivity entering the market (Okeyo, 2016).

Acknowledgments

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