

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**STRESS MANAGEMENT COPING
STRATEGIES AMONG ACADEMIC
LEADERS IN AN INSTITUTION OF
HIGHER LEARNING**

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Teknologi MARA. It is original and is the results of my own work, unless otherwise indicated or acknowledged as referenced work. This thesis has not been submitted to any other academic institution or non-academic institution for any degree or qualification.

I, hereby, acknowledge that I have been supplied with the Academic Rules and Regulations for Post Graduate, Universiti Teknologi MARA, regulating the conduct of my study and research.


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ABSTRACT

Academic leaders in institutions of higher learning (IHL) perform multiple tasks where they have to handle political and bureaucratic accountability whilst trying to balance educational, managerial, and leadership to promote their institutions. Coping with such challenging responsibilities can be stressful and hence they need to equip themselves with stress management coping strategies. Therefore, this study was conducted with the aim to identify stress management coping strategies used by academic leaders in an institution of higher learning (IHL) located in Selangor. The study involved a total of 46 academic leaders from 3 branch campuses in one IHL. The study employed a mixed-methods research design where data were collected using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The quantitative data were statistically analyzed using SPSS version 20 while the qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to trace emerging themes. The findings revealed that academic leaders experienced a high level of stress when handling bureaucratic aspects of their roles and responsibilities followed by the demand and status of leadership, and the management of others. They faced least amount of stress with regards to role confusion. Besides that, findings showed that a majority of academic leaders opted towards problem focused engagement strategies such as cognitive restructuring and problem solving strategies followed by emotion-focused engagement which included expressing emotion and social support strategies. Findings also indicated that there were no significant differences in coping strategies used by male and female academic leaders. Nevertheless, there was a significant difference in the mean score for problem solving, express emotions, social support and social withdrawal coping strategies between novice and experienced academic leaders. The findings of this study imply that academic leaders in this study are rather engaged and well informed of stress coping strategies but could be better informed if top management would take steps to better understand the complexities of the roles of academic leaders and provide the necessary support in helping them to manage stress.

ABSTRAK

Pemimpin akademik di institusi pengajian tinggi (IPT) melaksanakan pelbagai tugas di mana mereka perlu mengendalikan tanggungjawab politik dan juga birokrasi disamping mengimbangi pendidikan, pengurusan, dan juga kepimpinan untuk mempertingkatkan kualiti institusi mereka. Berdepan dengan tanggungjawab yang mencabar ini boleh memberi tekanan kepada pemimpin akademik dan oleh sebab itu, mereka perlu melengkapkan diri mereka dengan strategi untuk menghadapi tekanan. Oleh itu, kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengenal pasti strategi pengurusan tekanan oleh pemimpin akademik di institusi pengajian tinggi (IPT) yang terletak di Selangor. Ia melibatkan 46 pemimpin akademik dari 3 buah kampus cawangan di satu IPT yang terletak di Selangor. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah campuran di mana data dikumpul dengan menggunakan kaedah kaji selidik dan temuduga. Data kuantitatif dianalisis menggunakan SPSS versi 20 manakala data kualitatif pula dianalisis dengan menggunakan kaedah tema analisis. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa para pemimpin akademik mengalami tahap tekanan yang tinggi melalui pengurusan sistem birokrasi diikuti oleh permintaan dan status kepimpinan serta lain-lain pengurusan. Walaubagaimanapun, pemimpin akademik dilihat kurang menghadapi tekanan dalam aspek kekeliruan terhadap peranan mereka. Selain itu, hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa majoriti pemimpin akademik memilih fokus terhadap pengurusan masalah seperti strategi penstrukturan semula kognitif (*Cognitive Restructuring strategy*) dan strategi penyelesaian masalah (*Problem Solving strategy*) diikuti dengan fokus terhadap emosi termasuk strategi meluahkan emosi (*Express Emotion strategy*) dan juga strategi sokongan sosial (*Social Support strategy*). Dapatan kajian menunjukkan tidak terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan dalam proses menangani tekanan yang digunakan oleh pemimpin akademik lelaki dan perempuan. Namun begitu, terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan dalam skor min bagi strategi penyelesaian masalah (*Problem Solving strategy*), strategi meluahkan emosi (*Express Emotion strategy*), strategi sokongan sosial (*Social Support strategy*) dan strategi penarikan sosial (*Social Withdrawal strategy*) antara pemimpin akademik baru dan pemimpin akademik yang berpengalaman. Keseluruhan hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa pemimpin akademik terlibat secara aktif (*engagement*) dalam menangani masalah tekanan dan akan lebih memahami strategi untuk mengurus tekanan jika pihak atasan mengambil langkah-langkah sepatutnya untuk lebih memahami kerumitan peranan yang dihadapi oleh pemimpin akademik dan memberi sokongan yang sewajarnya dalam membantu mereka untuk mengurus tekanan.

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