

A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF JOB STRESS FACTORS ON JOB SATISFACTION AMONG GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES IN MALAYSIA'S SOUTHERN REGION

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ABSTRACT

Job stress has become a global problem in recent years, and it is rising year after year. The purpose of this research was to identify influential factors of job stress that affect job satisfaction among the employees in the government sector in the southern region of Malaysia. This research is important because it will help the company determine the best way to assist their workers in improving their job satisfaction. Job stress consists of three elements, namely workload, role conflict, and interpersonal relationships. The questionnaires were distributed to 108 respondents who were employees at Lembaga Kemajuan Johor Tenggara (KEJORA). Descriptive statistics, Cronbach alpha, and regression analysis were employed to analyse the result using the SPSS analysis. The findings revealed that a significant positive relationship exists between interpersonal relationship and job satisfaction whereas role conflict and workload does not influence job satisfaction. Finally, limitations and suggestions for this study are also highlighted.

Keywords: interpersonal relationship, job satisfaction, role conflict, workload



INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

In the 20th century, job stress has become an alarming issue that leads to serious problems, either to the individual or the organisation itself. According to AIA Vitality's 2019 Malaysia's Healthiest Workplace Survey, 51 percent of the 17,595 employees suffer from work-related stress, and one out of every ten Malaysian employees is anxious or depressed, with most of them being millennials born between 1981 and 1996 and aged 24 to 39 in 2020.

In the existence of other factors that aid in the organisation's success, the employee's performance is considered one of the factors that have an effect and play a role in its performance. It directly contributes to the organisation's success through the actions of the person (Saleh *et al.*, 2020).

Employees face job stress from workload, role conflict, and interpersonal relationships (Md Razak *et al.*, 2014). Based on Maslach and Jackson's theory (1986), individual workers who are exposed to a high level of stress will experience emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced professional efficacy. The organisation also will suffer higher absenteeism rates, increasing turnover, loss in productivity, and financial losses or damage (Lu, 1999; Karasek & Theorell, 1990). Stress has always been associated with negativity. Nevertheless, it also brings positive outcomes.

Employees nowadays spend much of their time at work. Malaysian workers work more than 11 hours per day. Therefore, the workers' psychology is an important key construct leading to organisational goal achievement. A report from a survey done in 2020 by Vase, a market research firm, revealed the current issue of job satisfaction. Being able to balance work with life and having flexible working hours are key factors for Malaysian employees to be happy at work, while demand for a higher salary, better training, and development are among the highest contributors to job dissatisfaction (Lim, 2020).

The success of an organisation is greatly influenced by its employees' performance. The organisation is required to improve its human resource through the creation of the employee's job satisfaction (Hutagalung *et al.*, 2020). Job satisfaction is an emotional condition that positively resulted from someone's judgement towards a job or experience (Baluyos *et al.*, 2019; Qureshi *et al.*, 2019; Cranny *et al.*, 1992; Lu *et al.*, 2012). Job satisfaction and dissatisfaction depend on the nature of the job and the expectation from their job (Singh & Onahring, 2019). The association between job stress and job satisfaction is notable. Job satisfaction which is currently referred to as happiness at work shows great demand as the satisfaction of workers is indicative of the quality of work, productivity, less inclined to quit, and more willing to accept low pay (Fisher, 2003). Job satisfaction may also be considered in the sense of a wider set of problems that influence an employee's job experience or quality of life.

Management needs to handle the issue of job stress and job satisfaction wisely. Apart from the loss of productivity, an employer may lose great talent, and dissatisfied workers tend to leave the organisation. Therefore, this research intends to examine the factors influencing job stress that affect job satisfaction among the employees in the government sector in the southern region of Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to employees' positive or negative feelings towards their job (Dinc *et al.*, 2018). Job satisfaction, according to Bettencourt and Sheldon (2001), is described as employees' overall affective assessment of the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of their work. Research done in the healthcare industry found an interrelation between job satisfaction and employee performance (Nagy, 2002), employees' growth (Al-Ahmadi, 2009), and care quality (Makunyane, 2012).

Job satisfaction is vital for an organisation to be successful. It has been studied widely and plays a remarkable role in employee productivity

and retention rate (Kurdi *et al.*, 2020). Promotions, pay, benefits, working environments, leadership, social relationships, and the work itself may all affect job satisfaction (Parvin & Kabir, 2011; Alzoubi *et al.*, 2020). Organisational shifts, according to Akhtar and Rong (2015), influence work satisfaction. Interpersonal relationships at work, such as tension with co-workers, bosses, or organisational practices, are all affected by job stressors (Hoboubi *et al.*, 2017).

A pleasurable emotional state resulting from an evaluation of one's work as achieving or facilitating one's values has been characterised as job satisfaction (Locke, 1969). It is a positive or negative emotion that arises from a worker's assessment of their level of job satisfaction. As a result, work satisfaction has become one of the most evaluated and observed workplace variables in organisational behaviour. It is a key indicator of how a worker feels about their job and predictors of work behaviour such as motivation, attendance, and efficiency (Bogler, 2001; Onyemah *et al.*, 2018).

Role Conflict

As cited by (Soelton *et al.*, 2020), role conflict is a conflict that occurs because there is a conflict when we are carrying out certain roles. In addition, role conflict can make individuals unable to make better decisions between the roles they perform and a form of dispute between expectations related to a role. The role conflict is likely to occur when the job to be done, the task to be accomplished, and the duty to be assigned to the employees are not clearly defined, described, and specified (Javed *et al.*, 2014). Work uncertainty and dispute, according to Tarrant and Sabo (2010), have a direct and negative impact on job satisfaction among nurse executives. The authors discovered that a decrease in position conflict could be linked to nurses' ability to balance diverse standards, among other things. However, Conant (2017) discovered no substantial differences in position conflict or job satisfaction among athletic directors employed at boarding schools versus day schools, or co-ed schools versus single-sex institutions, in a study she conducted.

Other studies also found that the role conflict experienced by employees could lead to job dissatisfaction (Conant, 2017; Malik *et al.*, 2010; Almutairi, 2013; Belias *et al.*, 2014; Ling *et al.*, 2014). According

to Belias *et al.* (2014), job dissatisfaction can be caused by a lack of influence over a work situation and the failure to enforce a ‘rightful place’ in the bank due to different roles held by the employee. In their research, Ling *et al.* (2014) discovered that when a bank employee experiences position stress, they are more likely to exhibit unfavorable behaviors such as poor performance and resignation from the company and they are more likely to experience work dissatisfaction. These results support the notion that position conflicts are commonly associated with negative outcomes. Furthermore, according to Malik *et al.* (2010), allowing bank managers some control in determining what procedures to follow to complete a mission would possibly reduce their sense of role conflict and role stress, allowing them to become more successful and efficient as well as experience higher levels of job satisfaction. Based on the above evidence, it could be concluded that role conflict is shown to be negatively associated with job satisfaction. Therefore, the hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H1: There is a significant negative relationship between role conflict and job satisfaction.

Workload

The workload is the amount of work an individual must do (Aoru, 2014). He also adds that there is a distinction between the actual amount of work and the individual's perception of the workload. Merve *et al.* (2014) state that workload can also be classified as quantitative (the amount of work to be done) or qualitative (the difficulty of the work). Employee job satisfaction can be a determinant factor of the employee's success in completing the workload given (Sobia & Yasir 2014). The formation of job satisfaction may be harmed by a perceived workload that is too high. Workloads that are too light, on the other hand, may affect employee satisfaction at work. Furthermore, some employees seek out career assignments, and their ability to complete these challenges is one of the determining factors in their job satisfaction.

According to Kyndt *et al.* (2010), workload experience is dictated by the task load and subsequent variables such as expended effort, task demands, and level of success. Shah *et al.* (2011) found that excessively high workloads and extremely low workloads correlate to low performance.

Likewise, a study conducted Tarrant and Sabo (2010) among the community of nurses found that work overloads and time constraints are significant contributors to work stress.

Other studies also found that higher workload experienced by employees could lead to job dissatisfaction (Shahzad *et al.*, 2010; Muhamad *et al.*, 2011; Altaf & Awan, 2011; Awang *et al.*, 2010; Sobia & Yasir, 2014; Ahsan, 2009; Merve *et al.*, 2014). Sobia *et al.* (2014) discovered that job satisfaction is negatively associated with workplace stress caused by factors such as work overload, job insecurity, and interpersonal relationships at work. Therefore, the study supports that work overload can lead to poor performance of the employees, which has ultimately led to employee job dissatisfaction. Consistent with Ahsan *et al.* (2009) findings which indicated that most of the workers were unhappy with the current culture where they were required to work extended hours and cope with large workloads while simultaneously meeting production targets and deadlines. Similarly, Merve *et al.* (2014) state that increasing workload may cause a decrease in job satisfaction and excessive workloads have considerable negative effects on job satisfaction. Besides that, Merve *et al.* (2014) found that there is a clear connection between workload and job satisfaction. The increased workload can result in a decline in job satisfaction. Muhamad *et al.* (2011) support this finding, having found that organisational variables such as workload and working conditions are negatively linked to job satisfaction. Hence, based on the above evidence, it could be concluded that work overload is shown to be negatively associated with job satisfaction. Therefore, the hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H2: There is a significant negative relationship between workload and job satisfaction.

Interpersonal Relationship

Interpersonal relationships can be described as connections between an individual and others in work situations and within the organisation as a motivation to collaborate efficiently (Stephen & Timothy, 2013). Juneja (2020) also mentions that interpersonal relationships may define as a strong association between persons working together in the same organisation. Meanwhile, good interpersonal relationships at work, according to Marisson

(2008), can boost individual employee attitudes, including job satisfaction, job commitment, engagement, and perceived organisational support.

Nowadays, most of the employees who have good interpersonal relationships in the organisation will give a good impact on the organisation. It is proven by Lodisso (2019) who identified that interpersonal relationships has a significant impact on the job satisfaction of both co-workers and supervisors, regardless of their position in the organisation. He also states that interpersonal relationships have a strong and positive direct effect on job satisfaction.

Stoetzer *et al.* (2009) conducted another study that found interpersonal relationships to be a major factor in the psychosocial work environment that can affect well-being, job satisfaction, success, and productivity. It is also supported by a study by Mustapha (2013), who found a strong significant link between interpersonal relationships and satisfaction in academicians in Malaysian public universities. Based on the listed evidence, it could be concluded that interpersonal relationships are shown to be positively associated with job satisfaction. Therefore, the hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H3: There is a significant positive relationship between interpersonal relationship and job satisfaction

Research Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the research framework of this study. It is about the relationship between job stress factors and job satisfaction.

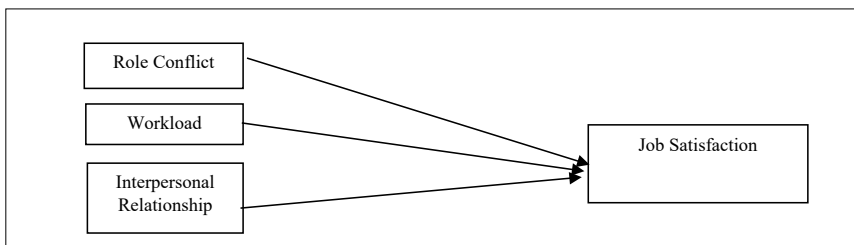


Figure 1: Research Framework (Md Razak *et al.*, 2014)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research design method was used in this study. The sample targeted was the employees at Lembaga Kemajuan Johor Tenggara (KEJORA). The sample size that was determined for this study was 108 employees. According to Sekaran (2009), most study needs a sample size of greater than 30 but less than 500. The researcher used a non-probability sampling technique which was convenience sampling based on the convenient accessibility and proximity to the research (Explorable.com, 2009). Data collected were analysed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS version 24). A 5-point Likert-scale format ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used. Three variables were measured in this research: role conflict, workload, and interpersonal relationship. The questionnaires were adopted and adapted from Md Razak *et al.* (2014). This study conducted a reliability test to determine the internal consistency of the measures used and regression analysis to test the relationship between role conflict, workload and interpersonal relationship, and job satisfaction.

RESULTS

Table 1: Demographic Profile (Gender)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Male	43	39.8	39.8
Female	65	60.2	60.2
Total	108	100.0	100.0

Table 1 shows the percentage of respondents based on gender. 39.8% were male respondents while female respondents represented 60.2% of the total. This shows that female respondents made up the majority of the respondents.

Table 2: Demographic Profile (Working Experience)

Working Experience	Frequency	Percentage%
Below one year	12	11.1
One to five years	25	23.1
Six to ten years	41	38.0
11-15 years	13	12.0
16 years and above	17	15.7
Total	108	100.0

Based on Table 2, employees with six to ten years of experience had the largest percentage of working experience (38.0%). It shows that majority of respondents were experienced employees. Then it was followed by employees who had working experience for one to five years, contributing 23.1% of the total. Respondents who had worked for more than 16 years contributed 15.7 %, followed by employees with 11-15 years (12.0%), and employees with below 1-year experience contributed the smallest percentage of 11.1%.

Table 3: Cronbach's Alpha Statistics

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	No of items
Workload	0.795	5
Role conflict	0.808	5
Interpersonal relationship	0.882	5
Job Satisfaction	0.835	5

Table 3 shows that all the variables (workload, role conflict, interpersonal relationship, and job satisfaction) had Cronbach alpha values of more than 0.7, which was higher than that recommended by Salkind (2014). Therefore, the results showed that the indicator was strong and considered acceptable.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.715a	.511	.496	.35521

Table 4 shows the R² value is 0. 511. It was found that 51.1 percent of the variance in the dependent variable was explained by the independent variables. Meanwhile, 48.9% of the dependent variable was explained by other factors.

Table 5: Summary Result of Regression

Variables	Beta	t-values	Sig	Result
Workload	.095	1.233	.220	Not Significant
Role conflict	.068	.781	.437	Not Significant
Interpersonal relationship	.503	5.723	.000	Significant

*Sig $p < 0.001$

The summary result of regression analysis is shown in Table 5. It indicates that interpersonal relationship ($\beta = 0.503, p < 0.01$) was significantly related to job satisfaction. Meanwhile, workload ($\beta = 0.095, p > 0.01$) and role conflict ($\beta = 0.068, p > 0.01$) were not significantly related to job satisfaction.

Table 6 represents the hypothesis results of this study. Out of the three hypotheses derived for this study, only H3 was supported.

Table 6: Hypothesis Results

Hypothesis - Statement	Significance	Results
H1: There is a significant negative relationship between role conflict and job satisfaction	0.220	Not supported
H2: There is a significant negative relationship between workload and job satisfaction.	0.437	Not supported
H3 – There is a significant positive relationship between interpersonal relationship and job satisfaction	0.000	Supported

DISCUSSION

This research was to identify influential factors of job stress that affect job satisfaction among the employees in the government sector in the southern region of Malaysia. It was hypothesized that workload, role conflict and

interpersonal relationship impact job satisfaction through job stress. The first finding showed that workload is not significantly related to job satisfaction. Research conducted by Fako and Forchen (2000) among nurses in Botswana exposed similar findings. The workload is not found to be an important determinant of job satisfaction among nurses. Workload is not significantly linked to academic staff job satisfaction, according to a correlational study conducted by Aoru (2014) at Makerere University, while both incentives and working environment are significantly positively related to academic staff job satisfaction.

The second finding revealed that role conflict also does not significantly influence job satisfaction. A study administered by Conant (2017) also found no significant differences existed between athletic directors working at boarding schools versus day schools, or co-ed schools versus single-sex institutions, on either role conflict or job satisfaction.

The third finding showed that there is a significant relationship between interpersonal relationship and job satisfaction. There is empirical evidence which proves the effect of interpersonal relationship on job satisfaction. According to Morrison (2008), there is a positive relationship and a clear effect of interpersonal relationships on job satisfaction. Workers should be given time to socialise with their colleagues and avoid unnecessary behaviour at work, according to Dungguh and Dennis (2014), to improve teamwork. It also supports the findings of (Lin & Lin, 2011, as cited in Lodisso, 2019; Awang *et al.*, 2010; Danish & Usman, 2010), who found that co-workers relationships improve job satisfaction. Job satisfaction will increase as the leader-member relationship and co-workers experiences improve. Employee involvement is one of the keys leads to organisational success that a leader should encourage.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that interpersonal relationships have an important impact on job satisfaction. It can also be further noted that role conflict and workload do not significantly influence job satisfaction. More than that, the findings cannot be generalised extensively in Malaysia as the scope of the study is only limited to Lembaga Kemajuan Johor Tenggara (KEJORA). The

expansion to various organisations in Malaysia could have provided better results. Furthermore, samples were limited. It will require additional samples for future study. Additionally, future researchers should also consider using Structural Equation Modelling analysis to examine the research framework.

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