

Personality types, perceived job-related stress and coping strategies among hotel front line employees

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**Nurshazliza Shaiful Kahar
Hassnah Wee***

Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management,
Universiti Teknologi MARA, MALAYSIA

*hassnah739@uitm.edu.my

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Abstract

This paper aims to investigate personality types, perceived job-related stress, and coping strategies among hotel front line employees. This study used a survey to investigate demographics and the key variables in the research framework. Data analysis is based on 326 hotel front line employees' feedback employed at 4-star and 5-star hotels in Selangor. The results revealed that personality types and perceived job-related stress have significant relationship, and coping strategies moderate the relationship between personality types and perceived job-related stress. The outcome of this study perhaps could help hotel managers in establishing efficient stress management in order to care for the organisation and its employees.

Keywords:

Personality types, job-related stress, coping strategies, hotel industry, front line employees

1 Introduction

The hotel industry has now been developed into a phenomenal global industry where both consumers and producers would benefit, and the industry continues to thrive and expand. Mohajerani and Miremadi (2012) mentioned that the hotel industry was known to be one of the significant contributors to multiple countries. In fact, the hotel industry would, later on, create a subsection, which will strengthen the overall

business. The hotel sector in Malaysia has undergone a thorough transformation, bringing important financial advantages and further extension to the Malaysian economy (Lahap, Ramli, Said & Radzi, 2016). According to Ng (2018), the number of hotels built in Malaysia has gradually risen over the last ten years. A data from the National Property Information Center (NAPIC) showed that the existing hotel supply at the end of 2017 was a total of 3,126 hotels (246,564 rooms) with an addition of 247 new hotels. In other words, there was an increase of 8.58%, in comparison to previous years, where the number of hotels was 2,879 (212,437 rooms).

However, hotel employees have been facing various challenges which are familiar to any other service industry and specifically towards the hotel industry, which are characterized by small scale employers (Asela, Nasrudin, Hasifrafidee, Hasbollah, & Simpong, 2017). Everyday situations happen in the hotel industry, where the hotel employees work for extra time to ensure the satisfaction of the guest. Hotel job is very demanding because hotels operate for 24 hours a day, and that means that the schedule arrangement in the hotel has been classified as countercyclical due to the fact the most stringent time is the period when other employed workers at other industries are enjoying their time off. (Sim & Bujang, 2012). O'Neill and Davis (2011) briefly mentioned the nature of hotel employees' welfare issues about interpersonal tension, employee or co-worker stressors and the probability of work being overload. This simply suggests that not all stress is derived from the demands of guests but could also derive from the respective work environment and conditions. When the requirement of a job position does not match with the employees or candidates' qualifications and capabilities, job stresses could occur. Moreover, these are severe physical and emotional responses that could affect a segment of an organization (Desa, Yusooff, Ibrahim, Kadir & Rahman, 2014).

Having an appropriate working environment in the workplace is important as it is one of the many human's needs, which allow them to perform and carry out their responsibilities more effectively and efficiently under a clear condition (Oswald, 2012). An organization should meet the basic needs of its employees, apart from focusing on achieving its goals and objectives. Providing employees proper working conditions has gradually become more important as research suggested that it could boost several aspects of an employee such as, competence, efficiency, and more importantly, their commitment in completing their daily tasks (Kamau, 2015). At the same time, employees are also required to provide excellent and satisfactory customer services to the hotel's customers, in the hope of gaining the customer's trust and loyalty.

Work is a vital function in both the well-being and health of a human being. Although carrying out a significant amount of work could potentially boost a person's creativity and happiness; it could increase productivity and eventually improves the workflow of a job. However, another factor that should be considered is the creation of stress. Stress can bring about many adverse effects on a person's welfare (Billing & Stevenson, 2013). Stress not only affects an individual's daily life but could also bring an impact in the person's working environment. These adverse effects indicated that hospitality workers,

particularly hotel employees, are exposed to stress that could harm their physical and mental health in a simple way.

A research by Zulbahari and Alias (2014) discovered that there are four main causes for hotel staff to leave their employment; lack of career advancement possibilities, lack of an option to securing other positions, excessive workload that implies multi-task experience for hotel staff, and workplace stress. Thus, it is vital to maintain hotel staff, particularly front-line employees, in the performance of their employment so that they require excellent communication or services to hotel guests.

According to Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001), psychologists from the sector have shown that personality traits make a distinction in managing stressful job situations, which also implies that what is stressful to one person may not be stressful to another. Darshani (2014) described stress is an unfavorable person-environmental connection and coping with stressful conditions depends on personality traits or the thinking style of an individual. Moreover, personality involves distinctive values, beliefs, and an individual's related experience. These differences will affect the perception of one's demand. In another sense, the employee's personality can either maximize or minimize the effect of the organizational necessity and coping styles of the employee. Therefore, Mallow (2016) added that stress is not always due to work discontent, performance impediments, and voluntary turnover. Thus, the kinds of personality and coping style of the employee may be able to minimize workplace stressors.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Front line employees

Front line employees in the hospitality industry are the medium through which companies interact with customers, and they are often seen as a source of service differentiation. In the process of service delivery, managers must rely on employee in the service delivery system to maintain the quality of the services they provide (Nickson, Warhurst & Dutton, 2005). It is the duty of front-line employees to communicate and handle countless customer requests (Slatten & Menmetoglu, 2011). Front-line employee is also responsible to settle customer's problem with a positive solution and make dissatisfied customer feel happy (Robinson et al., 2016). Furthermore, front line employees constantly interact with guests; the real-time nature of service delivery subject workers in this environment not only to the pressure of ensuring prompt response but also to several competing, often contradictory or conflicting demands and expectations for various services. This can result in health-related issues as well as absenteeism and labour turnover (Stamolamprosa & Frese, 2019). Other than that, front line employees are facing perceived poor working environments (Brown, Arendt & Bosselman, 2014). The industry is frequently characterized by having long and unsocial working hours, seasonality and part time, poor remuneration, non-supportive management styles and limited training (Knox & Walsh, 2005). These conditions can be

physically, mentally and psychologically exhausting for employees, which can lead to high levels of stress and put stress on work and life balance (Karatepe, 2010).

2.2 Personality

Personality relates to the variations of sensation, thinking, and behaviour in the distinctive pattern between people (Pradhan & Kaur, 2016). Individuals are developed with various instincts that regulate the character of the person acting or reacting to the scenario (Youshan & Hassan, 2015). Guilford (1959) declared personality to be the individual's distinct characteristics. Also, McCrae and Costa (1989) implemented personality as an individual attitude representing people's features as diligent, lazy, obedient, offensive, autonomous, and others. In addition, personality is regarded as all about an individual that includes physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual, making an individual distinct from each other (Desa et al., 2014). Ahmad and Ashraf (2016) have indicated personality features, and their associated responses frequently mean the impact of human relationships, work pressure, and the nature of the job. The model used for this study is Type A and Type B personalities, developed by Friedman and Rosenman (1974) which are the other most used notion. Type A personality is identified as coronary-prone owing to high danger of coronary heart disease (CHD), whereas Type B is referred to as non-coronary susceptible.

2.2.1 Type A

Type A personality is frequently described as impatient, ambitious, proactive, anxious, and overly concerned with time management (Friedman & Rosenmen, 1977). They are multi-tasker workaholics and push themselves over with deadlines. Three significant symptoms that can be seen in the behaviour of Type A are (1) Inflammation and exasperation caused by exasperation and urgency (2) free-floating hostility precipitated by even minor incidents (3) aggressive drive likely to lead to stress and an effective mental structure. Type A character has behaviours such as time pressure, extremely competitive, perfectionist, and tense (Watson, Minzenmayer & Bowler, 2006). Iwanaga, Yokoyama, and Seiwa (2000) discovered that Type A would react more quickly to any scenario as it could regulate group achievement. Keinan and Koren (2002) asserted that Type A prefers working with someone with the same skills. In a hard scenario, they also determined that Type A has better effectiveness and performance. The research asserted that Type A likes difficulties and is capable of under pressure performing the job. Type A also likes to regulate all around them (Dashani, 2014).

2.2.2 Type B

The theory defines Type B individuals as those who usually live at reduced stress rates, work continuously and participate in achievement but hate the strain when they no longer distinguish themselves from Type A personality (Pradhan & Kaur, 2016). Type B is more relaxed and dislikes unfriendliness (Friedman & Rosenmen, 1974). Without guilt, they can revel in pleasure moment (Rastogi & Dave, 2004). Type B has the self-

confidence to operate without hurry, complete the job on time and get nice results (Mahajan & Rastogi, 2011). For instance, in a stressful scenario such as family issue, daily hassles, and criticism, Type B was found to be greater than Type A (Janjhua & Chandrakanta, 2012). This research has shown that Type A accepts criticism from their environment. Keinan and Koren (2002) argued that people of Type B prefer to work together with someone else with great interpersonal skills. Individual Type B has sufficient self-belief in being able to delegate in their fellow human beings. They are calm and rational, and in a challenging lifestyle, they take care of their health. Manuck and Garland (1979) stated that when incentives are provided, Type B is extremely motivated.

2.3 Perceived job-related stress

Hospitality as a service industry is devoted to providing excellent quality customer service. However, the complex and vibrant atmosphere of the hospitality industry offers many problems that can aggravate job stress (Kokt & Ramarumo, 2015). Therefore, it is no surprise that the associated literature of Zhao and Ghiselli (2016) recognized job stress as a major challenge in the sector. The stress phenomenon is extremely distinctive. People with greater concentrations of tolerance strength can handle stress very well. At the same time, some individuals perform well when they are put under a stress point that activates them to create their best efforts. Others with a shallow quantity of stress tolerance, on the other side, may become paralyzed when confronted with stress.

Stress occurs in a worker when a job requires an individual's capability and capacity. An instance of a scenario for this is when the business has elevated staff expectations, irrespective of their capacity and effectiveness, and thus would result in stress related to work. Most of the time, uncertain priorities and responsibilities, and bullying or harassment is linked to the causes of job-related stress. The primary cause of illness in staff is often associated with increased levels of absenteeism or staff turnover. Kumari, Bajwa and Priya (2016) stated that; "Stress is an inner experience that produces an individual's psychological or physiological imbalance and results from factors in the internal environment, organization or individual." According to Shah et al. (2012), employees with higher discernment are much less likely to experience stress in the workplace. Lopes and Kachalia (2016) described job stress factors as a scenario in which employees have to distribute tasks that go beyond a person's capacity and the resources required to perform the duties, in a scenario by which there is a significant distinction between the incentives and the request to perform the duties.

Rizwan, Waseem and Bukhari (2014) indicated more explanation that regardless of both advanced and developing nations, the main problem of staff in organisations is job stress factors. This has become a huge challenge for the employer, mostly in developing nations, because the employer does not pay much attention to the employee's stress level. The stress may be caused by work and family conflict overload. The results include absenteeism, the inefficiency of job, or turnover. The variables listed make work difficult to do, leading to poor behaviours in the workplace, such as the aggressive or theft

worker. Moreover, Sampson and Akyeompang (2014) found out that hotel front line employees suffer from headaches, become frustrated and are unable to concentrate which are the results of job-related stress. Belotti (2017) stated that hotel front-line employees suffer from job-related stress mostly due to lack of control, support and for the amount of job demands. Thus, it shows that hotel front-line employees are exposed with stress.

Like past research, the damaging impact on job stress in the hospitality industry is supported by sufficient proof (Deery & Jago, 2015). According to Gazzaniga, Heatherton and Halpern (2015), work stress could be regarded as a temporary process requiring short-term adjustment, and the process is usually followed by mental and physical symptoms including depression, anxiety, and tension. Darvishmotevali, Arasli and Kilic (2017) indicated that it is essential to seek efficient approaches to assist staff deal with stress so that they can remain involved and productive in their job, mainly in serious conditions. Fonkeng (2018) stated that stress is simply an individual's reaction when a particular demand, pressure and professional aspect that occurs in the workplace does not suit their level of understanding and presents a challenge and harms the employee's abilities that in turn could generate a conflict for life in terms of being employed in the workplace.

H₁: There is a significant positive relationship between personality types and perceived job-related stress among front-line line employees.

2.4 Coping strategies

Coping relates to the behaviour and ideas that individuals use to deal with a scenario that identifies as threatening or stressful (Folkman & Lazarus, 1991). Coping as indicated by Ntoumanis, Biddle, and Haddock (1999) is one of the proximal procedures predicting psychological, behavioural reactions to stress. Coping outlined in this way is, according to Kramer (2010), a deliberate approach and no longer harassed by mechanisms of subconscious defence. Sonnentag and Frese (2005) stated that coping strategies are regarded as individual assets, e.g. locus of managing self-efficacy and expertise that could support the fitness and well-being of a character. Coping procedures are person-environment transactions in stressful circumstances with a particular duration of moment resulting from a belief in risk, continuing once or one-by-one at one or more response phases and resulting in removal or adaptation to stressors (Nekoranec & Kmosena, 2015). Furthermore, Chang and Taylor (2014) stated that coping appears to be an evaluation and assessment technique used to decide whether to provide a beneficial impact rather than a bad outcome and a harmful result from stressors.

Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter and DeLongis (1986) stated that coping is divided into two ends: first, decreasing or removing the source of stress (problems focused coping). Second, discussing the feeling or result of the stressor (emotion-focused coping). However, many researchers have tried to categorize countless coping processes however coping reactions are suitable to distinctive requirements and formed by using the resources and context in which they spread the amount is certainly limitless (Skinner

& Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007). Lazarus and Folkmen (1984) have distinguished between problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. The first is aimed at freeing sources of stress, while the second strategy involves efforts to reduce or remove the pressure.

Problem-focused coping includes Problem Solving and Cognitive Restructuring subscale. According to manual coping inventory (Tobin et al., 2001); the subscales involve cognitive and behavioural strategies to change the situation or to change the meaning of the situation for an individual. The author mentioned that these coping efforts are focused on the stressful itself. Thus, problem-focused coping attempts to ease or eliminate stressful situation by taking control and weighing up the negative and positive impacts. It is essential to learn how to cope with thoughts that are upsetting as people tend to have some negative thoughts from time to time. Thus, it is crucial to give attention to thoughts and how it will be influencing mood.

According to Galor (2012), emotion-focused coping skills aimed to reduce and manage the intensity of the negative and distressing emotions that a stressful situation has caused rather than solving the problematic situation itself. Thus, these coping strategies help a person feel recovered, but it does not address the source of their distress. Furthermore, emotion-focused coping increases the sense of pleasure positively and contentment in human lives and thus enabling the person to increase their ability to focus on that, which can be changed. However, it can be seen that women feel more than men that they need to control their emotions foremost with the emotion-focused coping than problem-focused coping in solving the crisis. The example of these coping strategies is seeking social support for emotional reason i.e. getting support, sympathy, or understanding as an aspect of emotion-focused coping. Thus, the author agreed that social support should enhance the utilization of active coping by an individual when confronted with stressful conditions. Social support also may operate in the stress process by reducing the perception or experience of work stressor and therefore indirectly reduce the likelihood of negative outcome such as psychological symptoms.

H₂: Coping strategies moderate the relationship between personality types and perceived job-related stress among hotel front-line employees.

3 Methodology

In this study, the population are employees working in Malaysian hotel industry. Hotel employees have been engaged because they are a group of individuals working in the hospitality industry where they have direct customer interaction and play a major part in the development and delivery of a service. Hotel employees are also often an intermediary between the company's conflicting requirements, management and clients (Ruyter, Wetzels & Feinberg, 2001). Therefore, it is appropriate to conduct this study to examine how personality types employees in hotel industry relate with perceived job-related and how to cope with them. In this study, full-time hotel front-line in the division of food and beverage department, front office department and

housekeeping department are chosen as the sample size. 4-star and 5-star ranking hotels' front-line employees were selected because they were the group of workers who directly interact and deal with the guests at the hotels (Songon & Abdullah, 2016). Also, it is recognised as a sector that required staffs to perform abilities such as communication, emotional, and technical abilities (Kong & Beaum, 2006).

A directory that lists various hotels presently working in Malaysia was provided to the researcher. The hotel establishment directory published by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia (2019) was used to decide the sampling frame, as it consists of a complete list of hotels in the Accommodation Guide. 4-star and 5-star rating hotels were chosen because establishments were mainly due to large numbers of hotels within this category presence in Selangor. Judgmental sampling was used as a sampling method for this research. The advantage of judgmental sampling is that it provides first-hand data based on the participant's experience. The participants of this study are full-time hotel front line employees as they have more experience in hotel industry than part-time employees. Therefore, for this study, the sample chosen has a specific criterion related to the study and can contribute to the associated data which are the sample chosen from the operational employees in the food and beverage department, front office department, and housekeeping department working as a full-time worker at 4-star and 5-star ranking hotels in Selangor.

The survey was distributed to Human Resources Department. During the data collection period, the researcher has followed up with the manager of Human Resources to ensure the questionnaires are answered completely by the staffs. Two weeks time was given for the respondents to fill up the questionnaire. It took about two months to finish the data collection for this research. The distribution of the questionnaire started in March until early of May. Out of 450 questionnaires distributed, a total of 365 were returned. However, 39 questionnaires were rejected due to the incomplete responses and double marking on the scale after received from the respondents.

4 Findings

The final sample consisted of 326 hotel front-line employees. The hotel front-line employees are summarized in Table 1. 219 participants were female. As for marital status, 252 of participants were single. The majority of respondents are between the ages of 18 and 25. This showed that the bulk of the front-line employees in the Selangor hotel are the young people. 156 participants have a Bachelor Degree. Most of the hotel front line employees received more than RM2001 for their income and have 1 to 3 years experiences in the industry.

Table 1: Demographic characteristic of respondents (N = 326)

Demographic characteristics	Amount	Percentage (%)	
Gender	Male	107	32.8

	Female	219	67.2
Marital status	Single	252	77.3
	Married	57	17.5
	Divorced	17	5.2
Age	18 – 25	164	50.3
	26 – 35	126	38.7
	36 – 45	26	8.0
	46 – 55	7	2.1
	56+	3	0.9
Highest level of education	SPM	49	15.0
	Diploma/STPM/Matriculation	105	32.2
	Degree	156	47.9
	Others	16	4.9
Income range	Less than RM 1000	54	16.6
	RM 1001- RM 1500	73	22.4
	RM 1501 – RM2000	79	24.3
	More than RM 200	120	35.8
Years of working experience	Less than 1 year	125	38.3
	1 year – 3 years	136	41.7
	3 years – 6 years	41	12.6
	More than 6 years	24	7.4

N = 326

4.1 A/B personality types

Table 2 presents the descriptive analysis of the mean score for respondents' both for A and B personality types. From the mean score results, "I prefer to finish the tasks at hand as soon as possible" has the highest mean score for Type A. It is then followed by "I prefer to move around rapidly when I am not doing anything." and "I feel impatient when I don't have any work in hand" with mean scores of 3.68 and 3.42 respectively. As for Type B, "I have never set deadlines for my accomplishments" and I do not work under time pressure" have the same mean scores which are 4.01. However, it is interesting that the Type A personality perceived highly by the respondents. It means that most of the hotel front-line employee dislike of not having tasks during works.

Table 2: Results of descriptive analysis of A/B personality types

Statements	Type	Mean Score
I prefer to move around rapidly when I am not doing anything.	Type A	3.68
I prefer to finish the tasks at hand as soon as possible.		4.32
I feel impatient when I don't have any work in hand.		3.42
I have never set deadlines for my accomplishments.	Type B	4.01
I relax whenever I want to do so.		3.80
I do not work under time pressure.		4.01

4.2 Perceived job-related stress

Table 3 presents the descriptive analysis for front line hotel employee’s perceived job-related stress. Results showed that “I know how to go about getting my job done” has the highest mean score. It indicates that most of the hotel front-line employees know how to do their job. Stress can be avoided if the employees know the steps of doing a specific task.

Table 3: Results of descriptive analysis of perceived job-related stress

Statements	Mean Score
I know how to go about getting my job done.	4.30
I am given supportive feedback on the work I do.	4.09
I get help and support I need from colleagues.	4.20

4.3 Coping strategies

Table 4 presents the mean score for coping strategies. Results showed that “I talk to colleagues who can help me out with the problem” under problem-focused strategies has the highest mean score. This means that most hotel front-line employees in Selangor are more to problem-focused strategies. It shows that it is perceived highly by respondents by which employees with a certain amount of working experiences often seek support from colleagues and supervisors to alleviate stress in the estimation process.

Table 4: Results of descriptive analysis of coping strategies

Statements	Type	Mean Score
I consider several alternatives for handling the problem.	Problem- focused strategies	4.18
I talk to colleagues who can help me out with the problem.		4.30
I get busy with other things to keep my mind off the problem.		3.81
I get upset and let my emotions out.	Emotion- problem focused	3.20
I talk to someone about how I feel.		4.06
I consider several alternatives for handling the problem.		4.18

Multiple regressions were run for the study. The results showed that personality types elements were able to clarify 15.6% ($R^2 = 0.156$, F-change = 29.906, $p < 0.05$) of the variance in the perceived job-related stress. The outcome demonstrated that personality types elements significantly contributed to perceived job-related stress. It concluded that hypothesis one (H_1) is supported by which there is a significant positive relationship between personality types and perceived job-related stress.

Coping strategies has a significant effect ($R^2 = 0.961$, sig F-change = 0.00, $p < 0.05$) on the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable, which are personality types and perceived job-related stress in this study. This indicates that hotel front-line employee’s coping strategies is based on their personality types and

perceived job-related stress. The result supports hypothesis two of this study in which coping strategies moderate the relationship between personality types and perceived job-related stress.

5 Conclusion

Most of Selangor's hotel front line employees are of Type A personality, by which they feel uncomfortable with not getting duties performed. They prefer duties than doing nothing. They also understand how to do their work well, which may assist in decreasing stress. When the job method goes smoothly, stress will be eliminated. As for their coping strategies, employees with a certain quantity of work experience often seek assistance from peers and managers in the assessment process to relieve stress. Under stressful conditions, they rarely apply emotion-focused behaviors.

6 About the author

Nurshazliza Shaiful Kahar is a Master candidate at Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam Campus. She earned her Bachelor of Science (Hons.) Tourism Management from Universiti Teknologi MARA, Puncak Alam Campus and Diploma in Tourism Management from Universiti Teknologi MARA, Kota Kinabalu Campus. She had been involved in 2nd International Islamic Tourism Standard Conference (HTSC) 2018 in Pulau Langkawi as the event committee.

Hassnah Wee is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Tourism, Faculty of Hotel & Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Puncak Alam Campus, Selangor. She obtained her PhD in Business Management in Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam Campus. Her research interests are in business and social science fields, focusing on event tourism, destination image and branding, sustainable and green tourism, socio-cultural and gender studies.

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