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EFFECTS OF WORK STRESS AMONG QUANTITY SURVEYORS IN CONSULTANT FIRMS DURING PANDEMIC COVID 19

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ABSTRACT

Work stress is the term used to describe the physical, mental, and emotional pressure that people go through because of their obligations and job demands. It happens when a person's capacity for coping with the demands and stresses of work is exceeded, leading to tension, anxiety, and overwhelm. Workplace stress can be caused by a variety of things, including heavy workloads, pressed deadlines, conflict, lengthy workdays, a difficult work environment, or a mismatch between a person's skills and the demands of their position. Therefore, this research aim is to improve the work performance among quantity surveyors during pandemic Covid 19. To achieve that, this study intends to analyse the effects of work stress occur among quantity surveyors. In this research, the data were taken from the respondents through a questionnaire survey. A total of 85 questionnaires were distributed, with only 50 questionnaires returned. The data were analysed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciene (SPSS) version 26. The results showed that the most effects agreed by the respondents are burnout, followed by unstable emotion and delay of work. The findings of the study can serve as added value to existing practice. Therefore, it will also help to reduce the work stress occur among quantity surveyors.

Keywords: *effects, stress, quantity surveyors, consultant firms, Covid 19*

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INTRODUCTION

There is no location in today's globalized globe that has not been impacted by the Corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected almost all commercial, economic, and social activities. Similarly, the construction and engineering industries are affected by the crisis. As a result, the building industry is losing money, which has an influence on the global economy (Biawas et al, 2021). It has also affected the transportation system, resulting in a shortage of materials. Since many construction companies are experiencing financial difficulties, many employees are being laid off.

The building industry has long been considered as one of the most important indicators of national economic growth. Quantity Surveyors (QS) have contributed to the planning and control of construction projects over the years by providing financial services and economic consultations for construction projects (Shayan et al, 2019). They also need to learn how to do work from home since this covid 19 occur and they must be adapted with the changing ways such as all the work or meeting must be doing in online.

However, as the construction industry faces more sophisticated customer demands that traditional competencies cannot easily meet, QS has been asked to update their skills and competencies by taking on new roles and responsibilities such as risk management, as well as adopting advanced ICT such as Building Information Modelling (BIM) for more accurate and automated cost estimation and planning from the start of a construction project and also they need to learn other alternative to still carry out the work such as using the application of google meet to carry out the meeting especially during this covid 19 pandemic. Due to this the quantity surveyor must deal with stress daily, which poses a serious threat to their health and reduces their productivity (Wang et al, 2017). Stress is a significant problem that requires immediate attention. This is because it can have an impact on an employee's work quality. This study is about analyzing the variety factors of stress contribution among the quantity surveyor such as work overload, short time of the deadlines of the work, long working hour and so on. Furthermore, a person experiencing stress will begin to exhibit behavioral changes, such as not attending work or being ineffective at their job.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definitions

Stress is a common occurrence throughout the entirety of the human lifespan. It has been a part of everyone's history as well as the history of humanity. According to De Raeve et al (2007), one of the unique aspects of life is stress, which has been so heavily emphasized that it has been addressed in literature and artistic arts from all

times. The Indo-European word "stress" comes from the root "str," which has been remarkably retained over time (Nicolaidis et al, 2015). In fact, the Latin word "strigere" and the ancient Greek gerund "strangalizein" have all been etymologically linked to the root "str," and they all signify to exert pressure (Chrousos, 2009). Ancient Greek philosophers were the first to fully define the concepts of stress.

According to Epel et al, (2018), in both scientific and non-scientific contexts, the term "stress" is widely used to describe a variety of related but clearly distinct processes. For instance, "stress" may also refer to actual occurrences in a person's life, such as losing a job or getting divorced (referred to as "stressors" or "stressor exposures") and stress can also refer to the physiological, emotional, and cognitive responses that such circumstances bring forth (referred to as "stress responses") (Epel et al, 2018). Stress is very dangerous to the human life as if we did not prevent it, we might get a serious disease in future. According to Cohen et al (2007), stress is now supported by credible information suggesting disease risk, such as cardiovascular disease and hypertension, together with infectious illness.

Next, according to Shahsavarani et al, (2015), when stress occurred suddenly, all muscles convulsed at once and this tension would end when the stress faded. Long-term, persistent stress maintains the body's muscles in a protective, spasmodic state. Long-term muscle contractions can cause a variety of bodily reactions, including stress-related illnesses including migraine headaches, tension headaches, and musculoskeletal ailments (Sallis, 2013). Chronic stress might cause heart and vascular issues. Numerous issues with the body can be brought on by a constant and continual increase in heart rate, excessive levels of stress hormones, and blood pressure (Shahsavarani et al, 2015). Such extended stress exposure can result in high blood pressure, heart attacks, strokes, or brain attacks (McGill et al, 2008).

Absenteeism

Stress is a common occurrence in today's environment and takes many different forms at work. Any form of change that creates physical, emotional, or psychological distress is referred to as stress. According to World Health Organization (2021), stress is our body's reaction to anything that requires our attention or action. Stress also can affect everyone to some extent. People will feel stress if it is related to family, decision making and work. Stress is a very serious issue as it can effect to the individual's work performance. Regardless of all the variables and circumstances, an employee's performance at work is a concern for all firms (Okeke et al, 2016). This is since employees are viewed as very valuable resources for their organizations.

One of the effects of stress to the work performance are absenteeism. Since many years ago, absenteeism has been a concern for employers, costing them money

and causing delays in production or poor service. Employees give a variety of justifications for their tardiness or absence, and it is the responsibility of managers or group leaders to determine whether the justification given is true (Grigore, 2020). Feelings of discouragement can indeed contribute to absenteeism in the workplace. When employees feel discouraged, demotivated, or disengaged, they may be more likely to take time off work or be absent. According to Grigore, (2020), the definition of absenteeism in businesses, the factors that contribute to it, and the methods used to manage absences during this crisis were all altered by COVID-19. This made absenteeism more difficult to track because of teleworking or virtual workplaces.

Unstable emotion

The stress that employees experience at work has a big impact on how satisfied they are with their jobs. The demands of supervisors, coworkers, outside parties that the organization deals with, and family members' actions can make we feel more stressed. Workplace tension and conflict, as well as absences, are just a few of the unpleasant reactions that work stress can produce. Emotion regulation techniques are "the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions" (Arnold et al, 2015). According to Soelton et al, (2020), emotional exhaustion that frequently leads to hopelessness, physical exhaustion, and uncertainty about performing a task. Certain emotions, such as wrath, shame, and anxiety, are commonly triggered by stress, which refers to damaging, frightening, or demanding conditions, showing a link between stress and emotion. To recover and restore his physical and mental energy over time, the employee becomes increasingly absent from work because of stress and bad emotions (Grigore, 2020).

Concentration, decision-making, and interpersonal interactions can all be negatively impacted by these unstable feelings. Physical symptoms such as headaches, weariness, or difficulties sleeping may also occur (Grigore, 2020). Instability in one's emotions makes it difficult to maintain a productive workplace and can lead to lower output and worse job satisfaction. This unstable emotion could then cause the person to resign or be fired.

Burnout

Job stress is currently a hot topic that has captured the attention of the media. Employees may experience adverse physiological, psychological, and behavioral reactions as a result. Burnout is a condition of extreme and prolonged stress-related emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion (Danauské et al, 2023). Organizations are often concerned about burnout because it has a large financial cost in the form of undesirable consequences. A prolonged exposure to a stressful work environment can lead to burnout, a negative emotional reaction to one's profession.

It is an emotional and physical condition of tiredness that is unhealthy for the worker and causes absenteeism, turnover, and poor job performance.

People who face burnout tends to be inefficacy. Incompetence emotions, as well as a lack of accomplishment and production, are referred to as inefficacy (Valcour, 2016). People who experience this sign of burnout fear that they won't be able to complete activities or succeed circumstances because they feel their abilities are waning. Inability to perform your job effectively, such as a lack of time, information, clear expectations, autonomy, and the relationships you need to succeed, can also lead to inefficacy, which can then lead to burnout (Valcour,2016). This component can also become active when there is a lack of relevant feedback and appreciation, which makes you doubt the caliber of your job and feel underappreciated.

Those people who are facing burnout will feel emotional exhaustion. The state of being emotionally spent and fatigued is known as emotional exhaustion (Dodanwala and Shrestha, 2021). People who are emotionally exhausted frequently believe they have no influence or control over life's events. They could feel "trapped" or "stuck" in a circumstance. As mentioned by Dodanwala and Shrestha, (2021), emotional exhaustion is caused by a long period of constant life stress, whether from personal or work-related stress. An individual's mood and mental health are impacted by emotional weariness. At first, people may notice that they are feeling cynical or gloomy more than normal. They might stop caring about doing simple things, making friends, or working.

Poor performance and productivity

Workplace stress can be caused by a variety of factors. There may be a strict employer, obnoxious coworkers, disobedient students, irate clients, dangerous situations, protracted commutes, and an endless task. Our ability to do our job is also impacted by stressors including family tension, money worries, and insomnia brought on by future worries and fears. People who are stressed will feel a lack of focus to do their work (Hamlett, 2019).

Stress affects our capacity for recalling knowledge we already know, processing new information, and applying it to both analytical circumstances and physically demanding jobs that call for focus (Christina Hamlett, 2019). We are more easily distracted and more likely to make costly, damaging, or even fatal mistakes at work when we are mentally weary from all the worries, anxiety, and tension that come with a stressful workplace or lifestyle (Christina Hamlett, 2019). High levels of stress might cause carelessness and increase the chance of making mistakes or errors at work.

Excessive stress (distress) is harmful because it interferes with the employee's ability to work. As a result, performance begins to drop dramatically to the point

where the employee lacks the ability to cope, is unable to make proper decisions, and exhibits inconsistent behavior (Fonkeng, 2018). When things reach their breaking point, the employee is devastated and no longer wants to work; as a result, performance drops to zero.

Delay of work

Stress can contribute to work delays. The people who are having stress are usually not in mood to do their work. They tend to feel uncomfortable and cannot think straightly in their situation. Employees will feel pressure to complete all their jobs and make sure they will submit them on time if they have a lot of work to accomplish and the deadline is approaching (Razak et al, 2014). People also will feel lack of energy to do work as they do not have any spirit anymore to do the works. As mentioned by Sean Peek (2022), although stress is known to cause an initial adrenaline rush, it will quickly sap our energy after that, leaving us feeling physically and emotionally exhausted. Our performance may suffer from a lack of physical and mental energy, which will have an important effect on productivity.

Procrastination is a common result of stress because people find it difficult to concentrate or feel overburdened. Individuals who frequently engage in procrastinatory behavior are also more likely to have unfavorable views toward themselves and the work of concern (Khadija and Azim, 2023). This delay in beginning or completing work might add up over time and obstruct progress. Additionally, stress can lead to a drop in motivation and engagement, which makes workers less devoted to their jobs or work more slowly. Work delays caused by stress could increase employees' already high levels of stress. It may result in increased frustration, overwhelming sensations, and thoughts of inadequacy (Razak et al, 2014). The tension and dissatisfaction that follows can further restrict work output and general well-being.

METHODOLOGY

The type of data collection used for this research is quantitative data while the type of sampling used is purposive method. The respondents of this research are Quantity Surveyors in consultant firms. The location chosen for this population is Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur. This place has been chosen for this research because Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur is among the urban areas where are lots of consultant's companies. Based on Raosoft, the sample size for the population of 108 is 85. So, 85 questionnaires have been distributed to the respondents through Google Form. The study achieved 50 returned questionnaires which are 58.82% out of 85 questionnaires that have been distributed to the respondents. According to (Nulty, 2008) the acceptable online respond rate is 20% which means that to reach adequate data collection, the research must reach the minimum of 20% of respond rate. Therefore, this study achieved the minimum of

20% respond rate which is compulsory to achieve adequate data collection and the data then analysed by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SSPS) Version 26. The analysed data were presented in the form of frequencies. Meanwhile, for the likert scale questions, the data were analysed using descriptive analysis.

The limitations of this study are time, respondents, and locations, and it relies on a questionnaire survey as the primary data collection method. The questionnaire survey will only cover a small sample size of professionals in Malaysia, as well as a small geographical area. Furthermore, the time available for data collection is limited, as it must be completed within a semester. As a result, the study uses the purposive sampling technique to determine the sample size for the purpose of gathering data.

FINDINGS

Demographic Information

The research found that the gender distribution of respondents indicates that the number of female respondents (56.0%) exceeds the number of male respondents (44.0%). Male and female respondents contribute a variety of questionnaire responses. Further analysis shows that majority of the respondents are 21-24 years old with (72.0%) while 25-27 years old is (12.0%) and 28 years old and above is (16.0%). Other than that, most of the respondents work as Assistant Quantity Surveyor for the positions in consultant firms which is (44.0%) while Quantity Surveyor is (42.0%) and Senior Quantity Surveyor is (14.0%).

Next, most of the respondents have 1-5 years of working experience as the highest which is (72.0%). Meanwhile, 6-10 years is (16.0%), 11-15 years is (6.0%) and more than 15 years working experience is (6.0%). Then, the total number of projects involved or handle for 0-10 projects is the highest which is (70.0%). For 11-20 projects is (16.0%), 21-20 projects is (10.0%) and more than 31 projects is (4.0%). Table 1 shows the demographic information discussed above.

Table 1: Demographic Information

Item	Description	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Female	28	56.0
	Male	22	44.0
Age	21 – 24 years	36	72.0
	25 – 27 years	6	12.0
	28 years old and above	8	16.0
Position in Consultant Firm	Assistant Quantity Surveyor	22	44.0
	Quantity Surveyor	21	42.0
	Senior Quantity Surveyor	7	14.0
Working Experience	1 – 5 years	36	72.0
	6 – 10 years	8	16.0
	11 – 15 years	3	6.0
	More than 15 years	3	6.0
Total Number of Project Involved or Handle	0 -10 projects	35	70.0
	11 – 20 projects	8	16.0
	21 – 30 projects	5	10.0
	More than 31 projects	2	4.0

The Effects of Work Stress Occur Among Quantity Surveyors

The effects of work stress occurring among quantity surveyors are also being analysed. From table 2 below, 'Due to the pandemic, 'I often feel worn out when I do my work' (mean = 4.36) found as the main effects towards the work performance due to the stress occur. Next, 'I have to put off doing things at work because of demand in my time at home during pandemic occurs' (mean = 4.22). Other than that, 'Sometimes I find it difficult to focus while doing work during the pandemic' (mean = 4.18) not much different with 'Due to the pandemic, I often feel that my emotions are unstable to the point that sometimes it is interferes with my work' (mean = 4.16).

After that, the respondent agreed on 'I often have muscles and joints pain' (mean = 4.10) as one of the effects to the work performance due to the stress occur. Then, the sixth rank is taken by 'Due to the pandemic, I often feel discouraged to do work' (mean = 4.08) while the seventh rank is taken is taken by 'Sometimes I find it difficult to fall asleep or sleeping for whole night' (mean = 4.06). Then, 'I often feel tired for no apparent reason' (mean = 3.96) and 'I feel more irritable since pandemic occur' (mean = 3.89). Lastly, 'I often have headaches after work during pandemic' (mean = 3.84) has the lowest mean score for this category.

Table 2: The Effects of Work Stress Occur Among Quantity Surveyors

Item	Description	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
1	Due to the pandemic, I often feel that my emotions are unstable to the point that sometimes it is interferes with my work	4.16	0.912	4
2	I have to put off doing things at work because of demand in my time at home during pandemic occurs	4.22	0.764	2
3	Due to the pandemic, I often feel discouraged to do work	4.08	0.752	6
4	Due to the pandemic, I often feel worn out when I do my work	4.36	0.749	1
5	Sometimes I find it difficult to focus while doing work during the pandemic	4.18	0.720	3
6	Sometimes I find it difficult to fall asleep or sleeping for whole night	4.06	0.740	7
7	I often have headaches after work during pandemic	3.84	1.167	10
8	I often have muscles and joints pain	4.10	0.886	5
9	I feel more irritable since pandemic occur	3.86	0.926	9
10	I often feel tired for no apparent reason	3.96	1.077	8

The aim of the study which is to identify effects of work stress occur among quantity surveyors has been achieved. The highest rank effects of work stress occur among quantity surveyors is “Due to the pandemic, I often feel worn out when I do my work”. According to Dodanwala and Shrestha (2021), emotional tiredness can be caused by a lengthy time of persistent life stress, whether from personal or work-related stress. Emotional exhaustion influences a person's mood and mental health. This is due to most of the respondents having burnout during the pandemic covid 19. Individuals who are burnt out might harm workplace relationships by producing personal friction and disturbing workflow. Maslach and Leiter (2016) state that burnout can be contagious and perpetuates itself through social interactions on the job.

Next, the respondents also voted for ‘I have to put off doing things at work because of demand in my time at home during pandemic occurs’. This is due to most of the respondent are unable to balance their time for working or to manage house chores. Women play multiple roles. Women must manage long stressful workdays while also caring for the children, cooking, and managing other domestic tasks. Women are expected to give up their careers to care for their families and

children, which undermines the concept of gender fairness (Akhtar et al, 2012). The respondents also voted for 'Sometimes, I find it difficult to focus while doing work during pandemic'. Unconducive place to do work is also one of the factors that contribute to the workers lack to focus on their work. According to Okiki (2013), employees who are stressed out at work and have a bad working environment tend to work very slowly. The workplace environment has an impact on employees, and a pleasant setting enables them to give their whole attention and energy to their assignment (Lankeshwara, 2016).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the aim of this research study has been achieved. The study reveals the data about the effects of work stress occur among quantity surveyors in form of the mean score and standard deviation. "Due to the pandemic, I often feel worn out when I do my work" gained the highest mean score compared to the other effects. It means that most respondents agreed with the statement regarding the feeling of worn-out during pandemic compared to other statement. The least mean score for the effect of work stress occur among quantity surveyors is "I often have headaches after work during pandemic" because most of the respondents did not often experienced headaches.

From this research, it is hoped that the work stress that occurs among quantity surveyors can be reduced. Therefore, more efforts are needed to spread the awareness about the effects of work stress occur to increase the work performance of quantity surveyors in Malaysia. For future research recommendation, it is recommended for the researcher to enlarge the scope of the area. Furthermore, this research is only concentrated on consultants' firms, so the researcher suggests that the future study can focus on both consultants and contractors' firms.

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2. Adalah dimaklumkan bahawa pihak kami ingin memohon kelulusan tuan untuk mengimbas (*digitize*) dan memuat naik semua jenis penerbitan di bawah UiTM Cawangan Perak melalui Repositori Institusi UiTM, PTAR.

3. Tujuan permohonan ini adalah bagi membolehkan akses yang lebih meluas oleh pengguna perpustakaan terhadap semua maklumat yang terkandung di dalam penerbitan melalui laman Web PTAR UiTM Cawangan Perak.

Kelulusan daripada pihak tuan dalam perkara ini amat dihargai.

Sekian, terima kasih.

“BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA”

Saya yang menjalankan amanah,

SITI BASRIYAH SHAIK BAHARUDIN
Timbalan Ketua Pustakawan

nar

Setuju.

27.1.2023

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