

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE JOB STRESSORS AND JOB  
PERFORMANCE IN RETAIL INDUSTRY**

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Stress is a physiological response to any kind of demand, caused either by physically or emotionally or both. Job stress occurs when requirements do not match the employee's capabilities, resources and needs. Excessive job stress will contribute to adverse effect towards employees' performance. Poor leadership, poor communication, role ambiguity, workload and unpleasant work environment are the major job stressors that affect the employees' performance in retail industry. Therefore this paper is aimed to entail and explain the major job stressors faced by the employee in the retail industry setting. Quantitative paradigm will be used where distribution of questionnaires is proposed as method of study. The data gained will be analyzed using SPSS version 16.0. Excessive work stress is predicted to affect job performance and according to previous research findings, role ambiguity and work demand are predicted to be the most determining factors.

*Keywords: job stress, job stressor and job performance.*

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 JOB STRESSORS AND JOB PERFORMANCE**

In this expansive globalization era, the retail industry has developed to provide “convenience” as a major core value in this industry. This service concept requires special obligations and commitments from retail workers by offering excellent service quality, which depends upon the attitudes and behavior of retail sales people. In addition, a worker may feel stress when her professional or career needs do not match their job requirements. Every people can utilize their skill and achieve their motivation through working because they can meet their basic needs of life. However, working has a hidden threat such as stress at the workplace. Stress has been viewed as an unavoidable consequence of work life (Azizi Yahya, 2011).

National Institute Occupational Safety and Health, (1999) defined job stress as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when job requirement do not match the workers capabilities, resources and needs. From the definition, situation in the workplace that may negatively affect an individual’s job performance and their overall wellbeing is the chronic conditions that lead to the job stress. (Azizi Yahaya, Noordin Yahaya, Kamariah Arshad, Jasmi Ismail, Saini Jaalam & Zurihanmi Zakariya; 2009). According to Luthan (2005), when a person is faced with a situation which poses a threat, and perceive that she or he does not have the capability or resources to handle the stressors the result can be termed as stress. This threat can attack the well being of person at the workplace.

Job performance is a human behavior result of which is an important factor for individual work effectiveness evaluation (Saetang, Sulumnad, Thampitak & Sungkaew; 2010). Job performance is an important factor for staffs to push forward to bring out an excellent organization. As job performance is an extremely important criterion that relates to organization outcome and success, employees that have high levels of job performance are needed.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Job stress is an alarming problem in the professional world nowadays. Most of hardworking employees get stressed easily either mentally or physically. According to Nortjé (2007), job stress has impacted on individuals' psychological and physical health, as well as organizations' effectiveness. The inability among employees to cope with job stressors leads to lower productivity, absenteeism, and increased mistakes on the job as well as accidents (Wan Hussin, 2007). According to Rubina Kazmi, Shela Amjad and Delawar Khan (2008), the employees who had high level of job stress had low job performance. This is similar to Abdul Latif Salleh, Raida Abu Bakar and Wong Kok Keong, (2008) stated that extreme stress may result in negative effects and affect the worker's health and work performance. Work related stress contributes more than a third of all new incidences of ill health and a total of 13.8 million working days were lost to work related stress, depression and anxiety from year 2006 to 2007 (Kanji & Chopra, 2009). Job stress is also negatively related to quality of care, due to loss of compassion for patients and increased incidences of mistakes. The retail industry environment is perceived to have relevantly higher level of stress as it deals with continuous demands from clients and stakeholder worldwide which requires special obligations and commitments from retail providers to be available 24 hours, 7 days a week, year-in and year out in a one stop service environment. Chain retail store must consider how to provide the best service to meet consumer

demands and provides full-time availability and the employee must rotate within three-shift systems. In the business, retail industries supplies end product that will create more demand and supply which further integrate and circulate the economy. It is also an issue that has been ongoing, which deserves clarification, as to what could be the possible contributors of stress among retail producers. This research intends to explain those possibilities.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION**

1.3.1 What is the relationship between job stressors and job performance?

1.3.2 Which of the job stressors contribute the most to job performance?

### **1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

1.4.1 To identify the relationship between job stressors and job performance.

1.4.2 To determine the most contributing job stressor towards job performance.

### **1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The scope of the study explains the boundaries or the limits of this research. It is defined by the following dimensions.

#### **1.5.1 Level**

The study will be focusing on the employee of all levels in Tesco Stores (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd.

### **1.5.2 Territory**

The study is done in Tesco Stores (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd, Sungai Petani Kedah.

### **1.5.3 Time**

This research is conducted on two different time frames. The data collection is done from March to July 2012 while collection of secondary data consists of journal articles ranged from year 1999 to 2011.

## **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The significance of this study is as follows:

1.6.1 This study helps the researchers to have a deep understanding regarding the relationship between the job stressors and the job performance. The study also will indicate which of the job stressors will contribute highest towards job performance and corrective and preventive actions can be done to solve the problem.

1.6.2 This study will provide an additional research on the relationship between the job stressors and the job performance especially in retail industry setting. The additional literature review also will be provided from this study especially in the retail industry setting.

## **1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS/ CONCEPT**

### **1.7.1 Job stressor**

Institute of Health and Safety Executive (2006), defined job stressor as an agent that caused emotional and psycho-physiological reaction to aversive and noxious aspects of work, work environments and work organizations.

### **1.7.2 Job stress**

National Institute Occupational Safety and Health, (1999) defined job stress as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when job requirement do not match the workers capabilities, resources and needs.

### **1.7.3 Work demand**

According to Health and Security Executive (2010), work demand defined as workload and work pattern. Heavy workload is referring to a large work volume, a high working pace or work under pressure of time is combined with little opportunity of influencing one's own work situation (Swedish Work Environment Authority, 2006).

### **1.7.4 Role ambiguity**

Role ambiguity occurs when an individual is uncertain about the role expectations and has no idea on how to perform the role (Tang & Chang, 2010).

### **1.7.5 Work environment**

Toxic work environment gives unpleasant experiences and at the same time, decasualize employees' behavior, whereby the environment reinforces low self-actualizing behaviors and it leads to the development of negative traits of the employees' behavior. The responsible and sensible employee can change into irrational and irresponsible employee as a survival strategy. (Kyko, 2005).

### **1.7.6 Leadership**

Leadership is defined as a stressor when the leader fails to about influence, motivate and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organizations. (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010).

### **1.7.7 Communication**

Communication defined as a stressor when there is inability to convey the message to the other person or a group (Mc Shane and Von Glinow, 2010)

### **1.7.8 Job performance**

According to Muchinsky (2003), job performance is the set of worker's behaviors that can be monitored, measured, and assessed achievement in individual level.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **JOB STRESSORS AND JOB PERFORMANCE**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

In this chapter, it will discuss on the findings from previous research from international and local research that connected with this study. The purpose and discussion of the literature study will see further and closely on the relationship between job stress and job performance in order to determine which of it job stressors have influenced whether work demand, role ambiguity, work environment, leadership, and communication.

#### **2.1 Job Stressors**

##### **2.1.1 Role ambiguity**

Role ambiguity is another aspect that affects job stress in the workplace. According to Tang and Chang (2010), when an individual is uncertain about the role expectations and has no idea on how to perform the role, he or she will confront with role ambiguity. Role ambiguity also is experienced by the person when the message that evaluators send are not clear or they give incomplete information (Azizi Yahaya, Noordin Yahaya, Kamariah Arshad, Jasmi Ismail, Saini Jaalam & Zurihanmi Zakariya; 2009). In other words, the employee's feels that he or she was entrap in situation which the job obligation is unclear and not stated in straight forward manner (Triantoro Safaria, Ahmad Othman & Muhammad Nubli Abdul Wahab, 2011).



Employees who are not clear with their job are easy to get stress because they don't understand what they need to do to perform their task. In this regard, the employee's ability to visualize job performance is affected and resulting in less confidence to perform job effectively as they experienced the role ambiguity (Li & Bagger, 2008). Role ambiguity is commonly associated with employee work performance.

According Normah Aris (2007), role ambiguity may affect of the employees to deliver expected standard of job performance when they are lack of information. According to Bhuian, Menguc and Borsboom (2005), the previous researches on employee job performance had shown that individual level factors like role ambiguity were able to affect the job performance of employees.

Knight, Kim, and Crutsinger (2006), stated that sales people who lack an understanding about their authority, job responsibilities, or manner in which their job will be evaluated, their motivation to engage in customer-oriented behavior would be diminished. Therefore, their performance tends to be lower.

### **2.1.2 Leadership**

Leadership is defined as a stressor when the leader fails to about influence, motivate and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organizations. (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010). The leaders in the organization use their personal power or authority would affect the subordinates attitudes and behavior. In other words, leadership can be defined as social influence process (Hakan & Jamel, 2006).

Poor leadership also has been associated with increased levels of employee stress (Kelloway, Niro Sivanathan, Francis & Barling; 2004). Little supervision and less support from manager in conducting the assignment will need to the high level of stress and dissatisfaction among the employees (Azizi Yahya et al. 2009).

A leader in an organization is a person who set targets and motivates people to achieve these targets to meet organizational goals. The term 'supervisory style' referred to a supervisor influences his employees to achieve the target (Farooq Ahmed Jam, Shakeel Akhtar, Inam Ul Haq, Muhammad Ahmad -U- Rehman & Syed Tahir Hijazi; 2010). Sometimes, this leadership style may lead the workers to job stress by creating tension, work burden, and dissatisfaction among workers.

Hakan and Jamel (2006) suggests in their studies that the leaders can cause negative effects if they give instructions and use their powers upon the workers without paying any attention on their ideas. This leadership behavior has direct relation with the high job stress and this might be the cause of low satisfaction and low commitment.

Broadbridge (2002), stated that the employer's attitude towards the employees affects their stress level. The employees suffer their superior's lack of recognition, appreciation and support. Furthermore, younger employees are afraid to approach their managers with problems, and instead try to find solutions by themselves and it lead to the stress at the workplace.

Lack of leader's motivation and support can affect the workers in the workplace as the workers need the tangible and emotional support including trust and confidence, guidance, recognition, and feedback from the supervisor (Coetzee & M. de Villiers; n.d.).

### **2.1.3 Work demand**

According to Health and Security Executive (2010), work demand includes workload and work pattern. Heavy workload is referring to a large work volume, a high working pace or work under pressure of time is combined with little opportunity of influencing one's own work situation (Swedish Work Environment Authority, 2006). Workload, poor physical conditions, and low decision making latitude, role-bad stress, associated with role conflict, role ambiguity and responsibility are includes as job stressors (Sumaira Kousar, Imtiaz Ahmad Dogar, Saima Ghazal & Idrees Khattak, 2006).

In addition, sheer overload is the most obvious cause of stress at work, regardless of the occupation type. The amount of stress increased when workers tend to underestimate the amount of overload they are being subjected to, though it was their sole responsibility, mentioned by Sumaira Kousar et al, (2006). The personal relationships and work attitudes of the foreign nurses are influenced by a heavy workload and improper scheduling (Huang & Yang, 2011).

Vincent, Denis, Imbeau and Trudeau (2005) mentioned that results from interviews and questionnaire surveys among sales clerks suggest that customer service is a major source of stress in this population of workers and for instance, studies that have investigated the risks involved in customer service showed that time pressure, mainly arising from insufficient staffing levels, are one of the main sources of stress or dissatisfaction for sales personnel in retail stores. This happened when they are rushed to perform their job tasks, and they lack time and/or are frequently interrupted.

Sales people feel dissatisfied and stress when serving difficult customers whereby sales clerks have to serve many customers and have little time to allocate to each of these interventions. In the office supplies department, sales clerks spend on average less than one minute with each customer and it become stress when they are unable to carry out a task continuously and finish it because the interruption of task while performing it. (Vincent, Denis, Imbeau & Trudeau, 2005).

In the retail industry, general employment conditions such as the precariousness of part-time work and uncertain work schedules was proved in the literature to be an important cause of stress (Zeytinoglu, Lillevik, Moruz, 2004). Furthermore, the factors that contribute to stress are part-time and casual work, such as unpredictability of work hours and schedules, job insecurity and low wages and benefits. A stationary standing position with constant movement of the upper body is a required position for the cashier in retail food stores. Highly demanding scripted interactions with customers that are continuously assessed and monitored by management must be faced by call centre frontline employees routinely and it lead to produce demanding, repetitive and stressful work roles (Mahesh & Kasturi, 2006).

#### **2.1.4 Work environment**

Workplace environment is defined as set in place impacts employee morale, productivity and engagement both positively and negatively (Chandrasekar, 2011). Toxic work environment gives unpleasant experiences and at the same time, decasualize employees' behavior, whereby the environment reinforces low self-actualizing behaviors and it leads to the development of negative traits of the employees' behavior. The

responsible and sensible employee can change into irrational and irresponsible employee as a survival strategy. (Kyko, 2005). It is vital to create a work environment in which employees are productive in order to increase profits for organization, corporation or small business. (Sumaira Kousar, Imtiaz Ahmad Dogar, Saima Ghazal & Idrees Khattak, 2006), mentioned that assembly line work is associated with stress as it is repetitious, monotonous, noisy, and lacks challenge and control.

Another disturbing work environment is poor noise control. Noise annoyance is the negative emotional reaction to noise and may lead to an increase in work accidents and sickness absence. Lazarus and Folkman (2011) concluded that the amount of daily conflicts experienced by an individual appeared to be the most important environmental event in determining the adaptation and health as an outcome from environmental events or stressor.

Zeytinoglu, Lillevik and Moruz (2004) stated that worker stress and organizational outcomes also influenced by workplace factors that are common to all workers in retail trade include industry restructuring and hazardous work conditions. Working in split-shifts in different workplaces and multiple jobs hold by some part-time and casual workers in order to achieve full-time hours of work (and to earn a livable income), even though this arrangement may increase their work-related expenses of transportation, expand the time lost in commuting from one to the other job, and create difficulties arranging child care and attending to other family responsibilities or schoolwork and activities.

Zeytinoglu, Lillevik and Moruz, (2004) added that work in a retail store kitchen involves using an oven with constant high heat, using sharp objects such as knives and other meat cutting machinery, using solvents in cooking or cleaning that can ignite easily, breathing solvents that have evaporated to the working area, or working in a constantly cold environment such as in the cold storage or meat cutting area. Repeatedly moving in and out of the building from hot to cold air, carrying heavy grocery boxes to delivery rails for customers to pick up, or carrying groceries to customers' cars are the situation of customer service jobs. In addition, work in garden/flower centers has its own physical health problems, because workers are often forced to work in extreme weather conditions, in physically demanding jobs, and with fertilizers and other chemicals whose long-term health effects are just beginning to emerge. Prone to violence due to the hours of work and location, such as working alone at night or in early morning hours in isolated areas, or as a result of being responsible for handling money or valuables are another description of customer service jobs.

#### **2.1.5 Communication**

According to Mc Shane and Von Glinow (2010), communication is the process information by which information is transmitted and understood between two or more people whereas, poor communication is the inability to convey the message to the other person or a group. In an organization, poor communication leads to de-motivation of employees. The higher level of communication in organization resulted to higher level of commitment and increased the employee's performance (Chen, Silverthorne & Hung; 2005).

Communication is a challenge in all human endeavors and poor communication occurs regularly in everyday interactions from personal relationships to business transactions. Lack of effective communication will lead to the increase in occupational stress (Deshkulkarni, 2009). When people are more worried about their outcome of their work, it can affect the way they treat other people and how they communicate with their peers and customers (Nilufar Ahsan, Zaini Abdullah, David & Syed; 2009).

In response to society needs and wants, retail service need to provide full time non-stop operations and exceptional work environment (Chuang & Lei, n.d.). Therefore, staffing demands have increased considerably and full time services continuous by shift work schedules. Miscommunication from the previous work shift workers will lead to ineffectiveness because the workload left by them is not correctly communicated when the work shift continuous by staffing part time employees.

## **2.2 Job performance**

According to Muchinsky (2003), job performance is the set of worker's behaviors that can be monitored, measured, and assessed achievement in individual level. Moreover, these behaviors are also in agreement with the organizational goals. Employee job performance is an important factor to push forward to be excellent organization. Mucci (n.d.) stated that the stress we experienced on the job also determines our performance level. When we are stressed, our mental energies are drained. Instead of focusing on the task at hand, we start concentrating on the stressor trying to cope with it. This happened as our attention and energies are diverted to dealing with stress, our

performance suffers. Having role ambiguity and experiencing conflicting role demands are related to lower performance.

Stress that prevents us from doing our jobs does not have to be related to our experiences at work. Stress is a harmful characteristic of the working environment responsible for impairing employee performance and it may be expected that its effect both on individual quitting decision and absenteeism would be quite strong (Leontaridi & Ward, 2002). According to ANOVA test, Indonesian nurses had greater degree of successful work than did Vietnamese nurses, who in turn had a greater degree of successful work, compared that of Filipino nurses. The authors also mentioned that when nurses faced work stressors, they had better work adjustment than the other two nationalities, which shows that the difference in the nationality of foreign nurse aides might have an effect on the work adjustment. Although most of the foreign nurse aides came from Asian countries, the nationality differences could still have an effect when they are facing work stressors, which contributed to different responses in adapting new living conditions and cultures. Overall, work stressors had an effect on work, but foreign nurse aides are more likely to adapt to complete their contracts (Huang & Yang, 2011).



### 2.3 Conceptual Framework

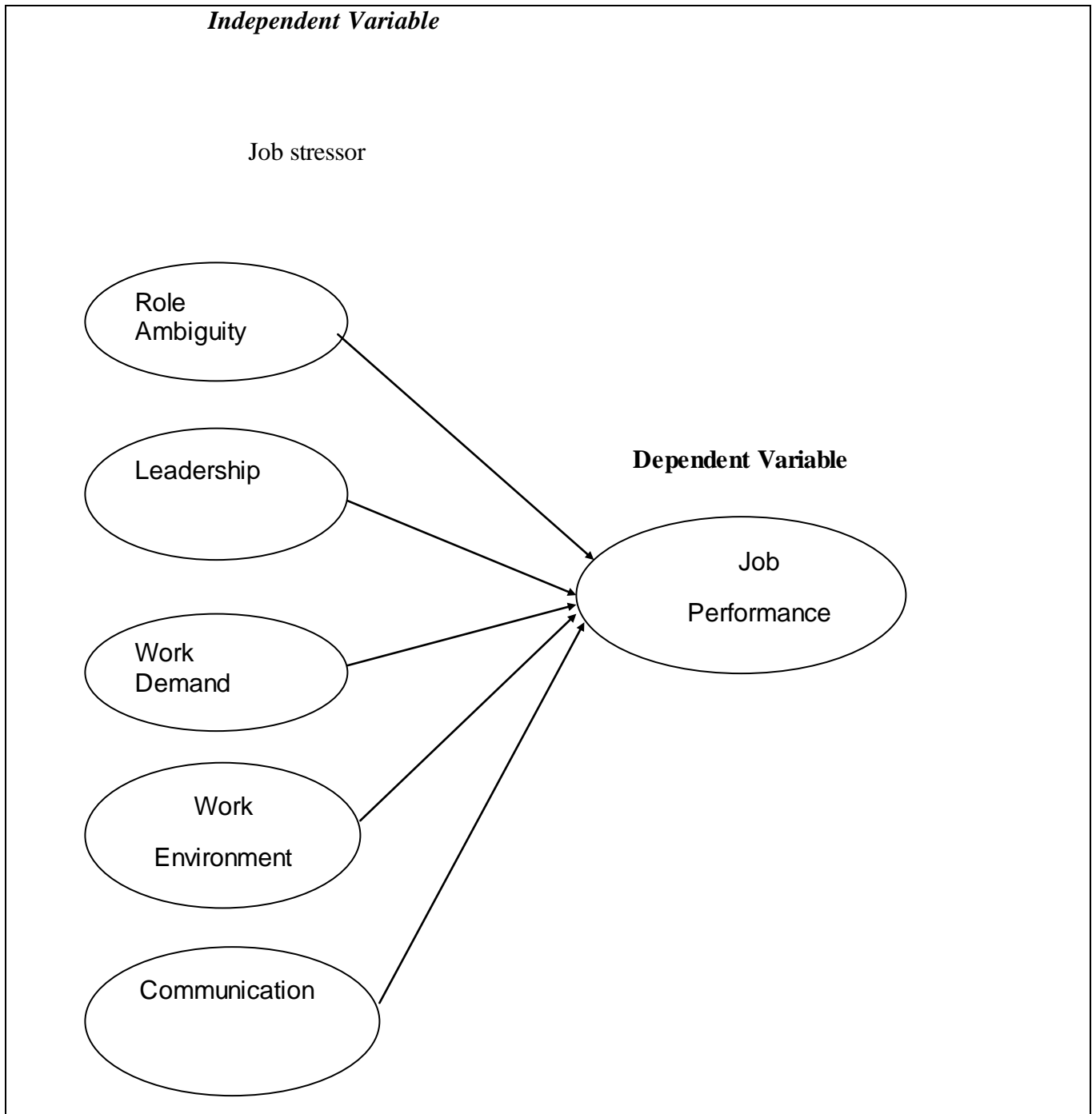


Diagram 2.3: Conceptual Framework of the study.

According to Bhuian, Menguc and Borsboom (2005), the previous researches on employee job performance had shown that individual level factors like role ambiguity were able to affect the job performance of employees. According Normah Aris (2007), role ambiguity may affect of the employees to deliver expected standard of job performance when they are lack of information. The work stress of house officers such as lack of communication and comfort with supervisor, job related health concerns, work overload and lack of resources can impact strongly and adversely on overall job performance (Rubina Kazmi, Shehla Anjad, Delawar Khan, 2008). Other than that, the overall performance of the employees will be influenced by immediate environment, which act as most influential contributors of employees' performance. (Chandrasekar, 2011).

## **2.4 Hypothesis**

The hypotheses of this study are as below:

- 2.4.1 Role ambiguity has negative relationship with job performance.
- 2.4.2 Leadership has positive relationship with job performance.
- 2.4.3 Work demand has negative relationship with job performance.
- 2.4.4 Work environment has positive relationship with job performance.
- 2.4.5 Communication has positive relationship with job performance.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

In this study, the research method involve is the quantitative research since this study will examine the relationship between the job stressors and job performance in retail services.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

For the purpose of this study, the research design will be cross sectional data. This is because this kind of design is conducted to estimate the prevalence of the outcome of interest for given population. The research demands for information from the employees of Tesco Stores (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd, Sungai Petani Kedah. The employees are from two groups which is executive and non-executive. The type of data collection method in this study is by distributing the questionnaire.

#### **3.2 Unit of Analysis**

As this study will address the issue like job stressors towards the job performance employees, the unit of analysis will be the employees of Tesco Stores (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd, Sungai Petani Kedah.

#### **3.3 Sample Size**

The researchers use the population of the employees in Tesco Stores (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd, Sungai Petani Kedah as the sample size.

### **3.4 Sampling Technique**

The researcher decided to use the census sampling technique for the research. This will involve 150 employees of Tesco Stores (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd, Sungai Petani Kedah.

### **3.5 Data Collection**

The data collected for this research comprises of the primary data. Primary data collected firsthand for subsequent analysis to find solution to the problem research (Sekaran, 2009). In this research, the data will be collected by distributing questionnaires to the respondents. There are two types of questionnaires which are mail questionnaires and personally administered questionnaires. The researcher chooses to use the personally administered questionnaires and distributed to the respondent to all employees of Tesco Stores (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd, Sungai Petani Kedah.

This technique was chosen because it helps to collect the questionnaire immediately after they are completed. Other than that, this technique also helps to provide clarifications sought by the respondent on the spot.

The questionnaire has been develop and divided into three sections which are Section A for demographic questions and Section B and C for questions regarding the job stressors and job performance. The questionnaire contains the questions that prompt the respondent to provide required response in order to get the information. The question is easy and clear stated to make the respondents more understanding to answer the questionnaire. There are also stated the instructions on how the respondents to answer the question that have been provided by the researchers.

### **3.5.1 Section A (Demographic section)**

This section gathers about the background information of the respondents such as age, sex, education level, salary, work shift and post.

### **3.5.2 Section B (Job stressors)**

This section includes the questions about the job stressors which are the dependent variables.

The researchers used the likert scale from 1 (Strongly disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neutral), 4 (Agree), and 5 (Strongly agree). This is to measure the information that gathered from the respondents. By using the questionnaire, the researchers are able to get the information from the respondents to carry on their findings.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

Table 3.2: Sample likert scale

1	I don't have clear, planned goals and objectives for my job.
2	My leader rarely gives me advice about self-leadership
3	I am always happy with the assignments I received.
4	I often experience loud noise at work.
5	My communication with my boss, co-workers, friends or family seems strained.

Table 3.3: Sample items from Section B (Job Stressors)

### 3.5.2 Section C (Job Performance)

This section includes the questions about the job performance which is the independent variable.

The researchers also used the likert scale from 1 (Strongly disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neutral), 4 (Agree), and 5 (Strongly agree) to measure the information gathered from the respondents. By using the questionnaire, it enabled the researchers to gather information from the respondents in order to determine the findings.

1	Resolving a conflict is a great thrill for me.
2	I have never been sent for disciplinary for inquiry.
3	I received good feedback from leaders.

Table 3.4: Sample items from Section C (Job Performance)

#### **3.5.4 Recoding of items**

In order to increase validity and reliability of data, some items are structured reversely to gain respondent's focus.

Sample items that are constructed positively (to be recoded negatively) are "I am always happy with the assignments I received" and "the fringe benefits of my job are satisfactory".

As most item in Job Stressors are constructed negatively (as stressors are treated as negative factors), some positive items must be recoded prior to analysis.

Tabled below are the lost of positive items to be recoded.

Positive Items	Original scoring	Recorded score
B1	1 Strongly disagree	5 Strongly agree
B2	2 Disagree	4 Agree
C1	3 Neutral	3 Neutral
D8	4 Agree	2 Disagree
E5	5 Strongly agree	1 Strongly disagree

Table 3.5: Sample of recoded items

### 3.6 Data Analysis

SPSS version 16.0 will be use to analyze the data. In this SPSS we use the features of SPSS for statistical data analysis which include descriptive statistics such as frequencies, plots, charts, and list. The raw data will be processed and finally the outcome the data gained. This is why SPSS program is vital in this research because it will process the data and the accurate statistical tests can be done in a faster way instead of using the manual calculation.



In this study, it involves the testing of statistical hypothesis. First, the researchers must know whether there is any relationship between the variables in the study to conduct the hypothesis testing. Through this, the researcher can see the bivariate relationship of the variables. The analysis of the data also used Pearson Correlation. The researchers use the Pearson correlation matrix to indicate the direction, strength, and significance of the bivariate relationships among all the variables that were measured using interval or ratio scale (Sekaran, 2009).