

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**ACADEMICS' EXPERIENCES ON
WORKPLACE STRESS: THE CASE
OF TWO PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN
KOTA KINABALU, SABAH**

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ABSTRACT

Academics face the risk of high stress levels at work due to work demands. Not only are they responsible to teach, they are also required to do research and administrative works. This study seeks to explore the workplace stress experiences among academics from two major public universities in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, namely Universiti Teknologi MARA and Universiti Malaysia Sabah. Using the Interactional Model of Stress (1982), it highlights the interaction between the work environment and the individual's perception of it. The context of work environment in this study was the workplaces i.e. the campuses and the methodology used in this study was qualitative approach. A total of 10 academics agreed to take part and to be interviewed with a set of semi-structured questions. Coding process was made based on the Research Objectives, Research Questions and the Interactional Stress Model. The findings indicated that 70% of the academics experienced a moderate stress, and the stress was periodical. This means that the academics did not feel stressed at all time. The academics would only feel stressed when they were pressured to perform their responsibilities simultaneously such as to juggle between their workloads, mark the students' papers and the insensible actions from their management / superior, and the students. The stress would relieve once they completed their tasks, and with the help of coping mechanisms. This study recommends that the universities should take more necessary actions in managing stress among the academics by conducting one-on-one talk, establishing a smart application to ease the academics' work burden and adopting stress check programme as applied by the Japanese government. The academics acknowledged, however, that their respective universities had addressed employees' mental health well-being such as by running DASS survey for employees twice a year and conducting talks on related matter. These efforts, nevertheless were considered to be less than effective.

Keywords: Stress, Workplace Stress, Interactional Stress Model 1982, Academics, Work Demands, Universities

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|-------------|
| CONFIRMATION BY PANEL OF EXAMINERS | ii |
| AUTHOR'S DECLARATION | iii |
| ABSTRACT | ivv |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENT | v |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | vi |
| LIST OF TABLES | viii |
| LIST OF FIGURES | ix |
| | |
| CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION | |
| 1.1 Introduction | 1 |
| 1.2 Research Background | 1 |
| 1.3 Problem Statement | 2 |
| 1.4 Research Questions | 4 |
| 1.5 Research Objectives | 4 |
| 1.6 Significance of Study | 4 |
| 1.7 Scope of Study | 5 |
| 1.8 Definition of Terms | 6 |
| 1.9 Organization of Chapters | 8 |
| | |
| CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW | |
| 2.1 Introduction | 9 |
| 2.2 Stress | 9 |
| 2.2.1 Overview | 9 |
| 2.2.2 Causes of Stress | 13 |
| 2.2.3 Impacts of Stress | 15 |
| 2.3 Policies | 16 |
| 2.4 Stress in Malaysia | 17 |
| 2.5 Workplace Stress in Malaysia | 20 |
| 2.6 Stress among the Academics | 22 |

| | | |
|-----|---|----|
| 2.7 | Stress Theory (Person-Environment Fit Theory) | 29 |
| 2.8 | Conceptual Framework | 29 |
| 2.9 | Conclusion | 32 |

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

| | | |
|-----|-----------------|----|
| 3.1 | Introduction | 34 |
| 3.2 | Research Design | 34 |
| 3.3 | Informants | 40 |
| 3.4 | Data Collection | 41 |
| 3.5 | Conclusion | 42 |

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

| | | |
|-----|---|----|
| 4.1 | Introduction | 43 |
| 4.2 | Demographics of Informants | 43 |
| 4.3 | Pattern of Stress | 44 |
| 4.4 | Workplace Stress Experiences of the Academics | 50 |
| 4.5 | Academics Responses of Workplace Stress | 68 |
| 4.6 | Conclusion | 72 |

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

| | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------|----|
| 5.1 | Introduction | 73 |
| 5.2 | Summary of Findings | 73 |
| 5.3 | Discussion | 77 |
| 5.4 | Implications | 80 |
| 5.5 | Recommendations for Stress Management | 83 |
| 5.6 | Conclusion | 84 |
| 5.7 | Limitations | 87 |
| 5.8 | Recommendations for Future Research | 87 |

| | |
|-------------------|-----------|
| REFERENCES | 89 |
|-------------------|-----------|

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| AUTHOR'S PROFILE | 95 |
|-------------------------|-----------|