

Level of Stress and Job Satisfaction among Call Operators: A Case of Malaysian Telecommunication Sector

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to identify the level of stress and job satisfaction among call operators (COs) in Malaysia. It also explores COs views on the factors affecting their stress level and job satisfaction. This research is based on a case study of a telecommunication contact centre. A mixed-methods design was employed whereby a survey questionnaire was completed by 113 COs, and two in-depth interviews were conducted. The results indicate the reasons and potential outcomes of high level stress and low job satisfaction among COs. Stressful working environment, poor supervisory support, and heavy workload are found to be key factors affecting COs high level of stress and low job satisfaction. As such the study provides valuable insights to researchers and practitioners.

Keywords: Contact Centre, Call Operators, Job Satisfaction, Stress, Mixed-method Design

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1. INTRODUCTION

The development of the service industry in the modern economy has become increasingly important in contemporary business environment. Organizations are often required to overcome challenges by introducing dynamic strategies and innovative ideas to purvey service (Castanheira and Chambel, 2010). Needless to say, contact centre sector has experienced an exponential growth in the last decade (Merchants, 2015). As a result, both Western and Eastern economies are given the opportunity to revel in unexpected wider range of employment opportunities (Holman, 2005). A plausible explanation for such a phenomenon is largely due to the need to offer an array of services that are provided to customers in a more accessible manner (Castanheira and Chambel, 2010) so as to overcome restrictions imposed by business hours and geographical locations (Holman, 2005). On the positive note, these additional services have improved operational efficiency as well as facilitated other marketing initiatives and delivering sales (Castanheira and Chambel, 2010).

In emerging markets such as Malaysia, contact centre is a substantial industrial segment (Kelly, 2015). It is identified as one of the key sectors that could lead the country to achieve higher economic status (Frost & Sullivan, 2012; Ramli and Mohamad, 2015). Moreover, Malaysia is heralded as the new “Asia Pacific Call Centre Hub” due to the high growth rate in the contact centre industry (Ananda and Ulaganathan, 2008). There are several appealing reasons to the rise of call centres in Malaysia. Based on a research done by Kelly services and callcentres.net (2006), Malaysia has a large number of contact centres (19), which is noticeably more than that of other countries, such as Singapore (9), the Philippines (8) and India (8). Many organizations prefer to operate their contact centres in Malaysia because of the stable economic and political conditions, strong supply of talent, good infrastructure, multi-language support and favourable business environment (Kelly, 2015). As a result, it increases the country’s reputation as a suitable and strategic contact centre destination.

Despite the burgeoning growth and commercial importance of this sector, recent industrial reports have indicated that many