



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**EXPLORING THE WORK STRESS EXPERIENCES OF
SECURITY GUARD IN A HIGHER EDUCATIONAL
INSTITUTION**

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**EXPLORING THE WORK STRESS EXPERIENCES OF SECURITY GUARD
IN A HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION**

WONG SIEW BING

**This project is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a
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Statement of Originality

The work described in this Final Year Project, entitled
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is to the best of the author’s knowledge that of the author except
where due reference is made.

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ABSTRACT

EXPLORING THE WORKS STRESS EXPERIENCES OF SECURITY GUARD IN A HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

Wong Siew Bing

This study aims to explore the work stress experiences of security guards in a higher educational institution in Kuching, Sarawak. The main objectives of this research are to identify the factors and the effects of the work stress toward the participants. This is a qualitative research and there were two research participants had get involved in this study. Interview method has been applied for gathering the information. Based on the findings, the researcher is able to discover some significant stressors and effects toward the participants. For the factors of work stress that can be identified through this study are customers, civil cases, job security, workload, salary, career opportunity, and competition among co-workers. Then, the effects of work stress are categorized into three areas which are physiological, psychological, and behavioural. From the aspect of physiology, the effects are illness, dizzy and black circle, and energy exhausted. In psychological view, there are two parts which are cognition and emotion. For cognition, the repression of negative thought occurred. In emotional perspective, some negative feelings emerged such as angry, dissatisfy, and fear. In term of behaviour, exercise, sharing and having no impact are the result of this study. Basically, this study is significant to organization, counsellors, and also the workers. At the end, the researcher has provided some recommendations for improving future research that related with this population.

ABSTRAK

MENGGAKI PENGALAMAN TEKANAN KERJA PENGAWAL KESELAMATAN DI SEBUAH INSTITUSI PENGAJIAN TINGGI

Wong Siew Bing

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pengalaman tekanan kerja dalam golongan pengawal keselamatan di sebuah institusi pengajian tinggi di Kuching, Sarawak. Selain daripada mengkaji pengalaman tekanan kerja, antara objektif-objektif yang diutamakan dalam kajian ini ialah mengenalpasti faktor dan kesan tekanan kerja terhadap pengawal keselamatan. Kajian ini merupakan satu kajian kualitatif dan sebanyak dua orang peserta kajian terlibat dalam kajian ini. Berdasarkan hasil dapatan, beberapa faktor telah dikenalpasti dan juga kesan-kesan tekanan kerja terhadap peserta kajian. Dari segi faktor tekanan kerja, hasil dapatan kajian ialah pelanggan, kes sivil, keselamatan pekerjaan, beban tugas, gaji, peluang kerjaya, dan persaingan antara rakan sekerja. Bagi kesan-kesan yang dapat dikenalpasti dalam kajian ini telah dibahagikan kepada tiga kategori iaitu fisiologis, psikologis, dan tingkah laku. Dari segi fisiologi, kesan-kesannya termasuk sakit, pening dan bulatan hitam di mata, dan kehausan tenaga. Bagi psikologis, kategori ini dibahagi lagi kepada dua aspek iaitu kognitif dan emosi. Dari aspek kognitif, pernekanan fikiran yang negatif berlaku dan untuk aspek emosi, perasaan-perasaan yang negatif telah dikenalpasti termasuk marah, tidak puas hati, dan takut. Di samping itu, senaman, perkongsian, dan tiada kesan ialah hasil dapatan kajian dari segi tingkah laku. Kajian ini adalah bermakna bagi organisasi, kaunselor, dan juga pekerja. Pada akhirnya, pengkaji pun memberi beberapa cadangan demi memperbaiki kajian yang akan datang yang berkaitan dengan populasi ini.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter will discuss about the background of research, statement of problem, objective of this study, research questions, contribution of this study, and the definitions of terms.

1.1 Background of Research

According to Health and Safety Executive (HSE) (as cited in Health, Safety and Environment Committee, 2001), in every five workers, there is one who had felt very

or extremely stress because of their work. Work stress can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional response that occurs when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker (Marzabadi & Tarkhorani, 2007, p. 225). The person will feel that external demands are beyond their endurance and resulting in physiological, psychological, and behavioural changes (Hiebert, as cited in Yong & Yue, 2007).

Stress in workplace can originate from multiple sources (Hayes & Weathington, 2007). Further, Lazarus (as cited in Emery & Oltmanns, 2000) argues that stress arises not from life events themselves but from the individual's primary cognitive evaluation toward the challenge, threat, or harm posed by a particular event. Thus, researcher believed that in different types of working contexts or careers, individual will have different views toward the stressors related to that particular job.

For information, the universe of potential outcomes of the stress is infinite. Therefore, it is not feasible to assess each and every outcome for different populations or mean different types of careers. Thus, what is required is a representative sampling of the universe of outcomes, a sampling that represents the breadth, scope, and form of potential outcomes (Aneshensel, 1996). Since this study intends to discover the sources of the factors that causing the work related stress among the security guard, then, the representative sample for this study are security guards and the setting was within a higher educational institution.

Regarding to the effects of stress, Pines and Aronson (as cited at Yong & Yue, 2007) define that work burnout or work related stress will result in physical, emotional, and psychological exhaustion. At the same line, according to Emery and Oltmanns (2000), they also view that stress is able to stimulate physiological, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural responses. In general, previous researches are more focused on the impact of stress toward individuals' physiological, psychological

and also the behavioural. Therefore, this study is focused on these three main areas in revealing the consequences of under the work stress of choosing population. For psychological part, the researcher included the cognition and emotional aspects.

1.2 Statement of Problem

From the literature review, the researcher found that many researches related with work stress have been done. Most of the researches are studies about occupations such as teacher, nurse, and medical worker by studying factors of their job stress as well as their effects toward the employee in different occupations. Somehow, the majority of them have been done in Western contexts.

Other than that, there is limited research on work related stress in Asian context (China) but they are more related to teaching profession. The study of the work as security guard is limited even though in Western countries.

1.3 Objective of Study

The objective of the study is divided into two which they are general objective and specific objectives.

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study is to explore the work stress experiences among the security guards within a higher educational institution.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

There are some specific objectives for this study, they are:

- a) To explore the work stress experiences among the security guards in higher educational institution.
- b) To explore the work related factors that causing the work stress among the security guards.
- c) To explore the effects of work stress toward the security guards.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions are as follow:

- a) What are the experiences of work stress among the security guards in higher educational institution?
- b) What are the work related factors that causing the work stress among the security guards?
- c) What are the effects of the work stress toward the physiology of security guards?

1.5 Contribution of the Study

As limited research has been done on work related stress that exist in the occupation of security guard, therefore, the researcher would like to contribute to knowledge about this population. The findings are able to increase the awareness of the society about the type of work related stress that exist among this particular group. This finding can be helpful to the social workers or the counsellors in understanding more about their client as the client comes from this population. By having more information about the work related stress of this population, the social worker or counsellor might be able to assist the client more effectively as the counsellor have basic ideas about their problem in their work.

Other than that, this study also studied the effects of work related stress toward security guards. The effects are mostly negative in nature based on the previous findings in other job contexts. To reduce such negative impacts, there is a need to develop the coping strategies in dealing with the stressful working environment. The result of this study will be a reminder to companies delivering similar services to the society to pay more attention to their workers' welfare. As they have the knowledge of the factors that causes stress to the workers, they might be able to take corrective actions. The purpose is to provide a better working environment to the workers (Taylor & Bruin, 2005).

1.6 Definitions of Terms

There are two definition of terms which are Conceptual Definition of Term and Operational Definition of Term. Conceptual definition means a careful and systematic definition of a construct to clarify one's thinking and often related to concepts or theoretical statements (Kreuger & Neuman, 2006, p. 171). Meanwhile, operational definition is the definition of a variable in term of the specific activities to measure or indicate in the empirical world (Kreuger & Neuman, 2006, p. 561).

1.6.1 Work stress

1.6.1.1 Conceptual Definition

Work stress can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional response that occurs when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker (Marzabadi & Tarkhorani, 2007, p. 225).

1.6.1.2 Operational Definition

A type of stress that is caused by the work related factors and able to bring impacts toward the worker.

1.6.2 Security Guard

1.6.2.1 Conceptual Definition

Security guards, also called security officers, watch and inspect property to protect against fire, theft, vandalism, terrorism, and illegal activity. These workers protect their employer's investment, enforce laws on the property, and deter criminal activity and other problems (Bureau of Labor Statics, 2008).

1.6.2.2 Operational Definition

Security guards are those wearing uniform and protecting the assets and people within a higher educational institution.

1.6.3 Physiology

1.6.3.1 Conceptual Definition

Physiology provides a forum for many physiological areas. For example, respiration, circulation, the blood system, motor functions, and digestion, as well as sport and occupational physiology (Cheloveka, 1975).

1.6.3.2 Operational Definition

It means the body condition and biological health of the worker.

1.6.4 Psychology

1.6.4.1 Conceptual Definition

Psychology is a study of mind and human behaviours (Friendenberg & Silverman, 2006).

1.6.4.2 Operational Definition

It included the perceptions of security guard toward work and the emotions existing when they are working under stress.

1.6.5 Behaviour

1.6.5.1 Conceptual Definition

It is considered as translation of sensory input onto a pattern of motor actions whose purpose is to complete a given task (Friedenberg & Silverman, 2006).

1.6.5.2 Operational Definition

It is related to job performance and the responses of the security guard when dealing with the work related stress.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter had discussed the background of research, statement of problem, objective of this study, research questions, contribution of this study, and the definitions of terms. The next chapter is going to discuss the literature review for this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will discuss about the previous researches on stress and work stress. Then, it also mentioned the theories used in this research. Continually, the work related factors that contributed to work stress and the effects of stress toward the worker will be discussed as well.

2.1 Stress

Stress is an event that creates physiological or psychological strain for an individual (Emery & Oltman, 2000). It also can be perceived as a challenge that requires one to have physiological, psychological, and behavioural adaptation.

Stress can occur as there is a difference between the external world and internal needs, values, and ambition (Aneshensel, 1996). In other words, there is a discrepancy between what an individual wanted and what he or she gained.

In the world of work, there might be similar problem as the working environment is incongruent with employee's values or the worker unable to gain or fulfil their needs. Therefore, the researcher is interested in knowing the factors that are able to create this discrepancy or stress among the workers, especially the security guards.

2.2 Work Stress

Everyone who works is subject to certain amount of work-related stress but the sources of stress are different depend on the type of job and organization the workers work with (Wood, Wood, & Boyd, 2004).

Previous researches have studies the work stress in different job contexts, for example, teacher (Wang & Zhang, 2007; Zurlo, Pes, & Cooper, 2007), nurse (Escriba-Agiiir & Perez-Hoyos, 2007), police (Miller, 2007), counsellor (Fourie, Rothmann, & Vijver, 2007), restaurant manager (Hayes & Wathington, 2007), university staff (Bruin & Taylor, 2006), and so on.

Lazarus (as cited in Emery & Oltmanns, 2000) argued that stress arises not from life events themselves but from the individual's primary appraisal or cognitive evaluation of the challenge, threat, or harm posed by a particular event. Thus, researcher believes that in different types of working contexts or careers, individuals will have different views toward the stressors related to that particular job. These changes or effects are the second element that the researcher is intended to discover through this study.

2.3 Theories Used

The focus of this study is to explore the work stress experiences of the security guard and to find out what are the work related factors of the work stress within the job of security guard and also the effects of the stress toward the workers. Therefore, three theories are used in this study included Lazarus's Cognitive Theory of Stress by Richard Lazarus, Maslow's Need Theory by Abraham Maslow and Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) by Albert Ellis.

2.3.1 Lazarus's Cognitive Theory of Stress

Richard Lazarus mentioned that when an individual is facing with certain stressful events, he or she will engage in a cognitive process that involving a primary and secondary appraisal (Wood, Wood, & Boyd, 2004). Primary appraisal happens when one evaluates the significance of situation whether it is affecting his or her well-being positively, negatively, or irrelevant. Events that labelled as stressful are including harm or loss, threat, or challenges (Wood, Wood, & Boyd, 2004). If a situation is perceived as a threat, harm, or loss, one will experience negative emotions such as fear, anger, or resentment (Folkman, as cited in Wood, Wood, & Boyd, 2004). However, if that particular event has been perceived as a challenge, most probably one will have positive emotions like excitement, hopefulness, and eagerness (Wood, Wood, & Boyd, 2004). Therefore, the appraisal of an individual toward an event whether it is stressful or challenging will determine the nature of outcomes.

For second appraisal, one will evaluate whether there is any available coping resources for dealing with that stressful event. After that, one will have physiological, emotional, and behavioural reactions toward the stressors.

2.3.2 Maslow's Need Theory

This theory is developed by Abraham Maslow. The basic concept of this theory is that human beings have an innate desire to achieve their needs and lead them to a more meaningful and satisfying life (Phares, 1991). There are five basic needs in which they are physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization (Engler, 1999). From previous findings, the needs such as job security can be categorized as a safety need, support from co-worker and supervisor can be defined as belongingness need. The results showed that if the needs are failed to be achieved, the workers felt stress for their work. Therefore, the researcher believes that if the needs of the security guards are unable to be fulfilled, the same situation is going to happen. Thus, the researcher aims to identify the unfulfilled needs of the security guards through this research based on the participants' point of view.

2.3.3 Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT)

The researcher uses the REBT developed by Albert Ellis in early 1955 (Corey, 2005) for the purpose of discovering the effects of work stress toward the respondents. The researcher has decided to use this theory because this therapy is formed based on the assumption that cognition, emotions, and behaviours interact significantly and they have a cause-and-effect relationship among themselves (Corey, 2005). In the researcher's point of view, the ABC Theory of Personality within the REBT is applicable for this study because the researcher believes in individual differences rather than group. This theory has mentioned the A as activating event or the existence of a fact, B is individual's belief about A, and C is emotional and behavioural consequence of that particular person (Corey, 2005). According to this theory, C is caused by B but not A (Corey, 2005).