

Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Resources Development

THE FACTORS OF JOB STRESS AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Bachelor of Science (Honours) Human Resources Development 2020/2021

THE FACTORS OF JOB STRESS AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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This project is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Science (Honours) Human Resources Development

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The project entitled 'The Factors of Job Stress and Coping Strategies Among Secondary School Teachers During Covid-19 Pandemic' was prepared by Stephenie Stefert anak Peter and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Science with Honours (Human Resource Development).
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ABSTRACT

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The aim of this study was to investigate the factors of job stress and coping strategies among secondary school teachers during Covid-19 pandemic and their strategies to cope with the stressors. This study is an explorative study. This research is conducted qualitatively to get an indepth understanding of the knowledge of job stress and coping strategies. The sampling method used in this study is convenience sampling, where informants are chosen based on their suitability of sources of the data in which the research area are concern. There are 6 informants that has been chosen to participate in this study. Data for this study were collected through a semi-structured interview and open-ended questions and were analyse by using content analysis approach. The finding of this study has showed that the factors that contribute to job stress among secondary school teachers can be divided into two categories which is environmental stressors and individual stressor. Environmental stressors were such as work-overload and technological changes, while individual factor were such as role ambiguity. The finding also has highlight two coping strategies that were commonly used by teachers to cope with the identified stressors, which is problem-focused coping strategies and emotion-focused coping strategies. Problem-focused strategies were such as leisure and meditation while emotion-focused strategies were such as create flexible timetable. This study also has highlighted some implication for the institution, HR practitioners and also some recommendation for future research.

ABSTRAK

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Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyiasat faktor stres pekerjaan dan strategi mengatasinya dalam kalangan guru sekolah menengah semasa pandemic Covid-19. Kajian ini dijalankan secara kualitatif untuk mendapatkan pemahaman yang mendalam mengenai stress pekerjaan dan strategi mengatasinya. Kaedah persampelan yang digunakan dalam kajian ini adalah convenience sampling, di mana pemberi maklumat dipilih berdasarkan kesesuai sumber data yang berkaitan dengan kajian ini. Terdapat 6 orang pemberi maklumat telah dipilih untuk terlibat dalam kajian ini. Data untuk kajian ini diperolehi melalui temuduga separa berstruktur dan openended questions, yang kemudiannya dianalisis dengan menggunakan kaedah content analysis. Hasil dapatan kajian telah menunjukkan punca yang menyumbang kepada stress pekerjaan terbahagi kepada dua kategori iaitu tekanan persekitaran dan tekanan individu sendiri. Tekanan persekitaran adalah seperti lebihan bebanan kerja dan perubahan teknologikal manakala tekanan individu pula adalah seperti kekaburan peranan seseorang individu terhadap tugas. Dapatan kajian juga telah menggariskan dua strategi mengatasi iaitu strategi berfokus pada masalah dan strategi berfokus pada emosi. Strategi berfokus pada masalah adalah seperti membuat jadual yang fleksibel manakala strategi berfokus pada emosi adalah seperti masa lapang dan meditasi. Kajian ini juga elah menggariskan beberapa implikasi kepada institusi dan pengamal sumber manusia serta mengemukakan cadangan untuk kajian di masa akan datang.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1Background of study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors of job stress and coping strategies among secondary school teachers especially in current situation which is in the pandemic of Covid-19. Job stress is considered as the most popular 'occupational disease' that has affected individual's physically and psychologically. This type of occupational disease has cause an impactful pressure especially on employee's performance (Leka et al., 2004).

The profession as a teacher were stressful enough with the typically heavy workload, times pressures, their responsibilities at home, and now the rapid conversion to online teaching was just like icing on the cake. Ample studies have shown that teacher are more keen to feel stress when there are lack of support and time provided to them when teaching student (Kyriacou, 2010; Pitchers & Soden, 1998; Travers & Cooper, 1996). Lack of technologies competencies also may contribute to teacher to experience stress (Al-Fudail & Mallar, 2008). The transition to digital-based teaching inflicted by this pandemic can be perceived as a mixture of traditional public schooling and homeschooling (Wrase, 2020). Mastering the technical skills that were required to conduct this online teaching seem like a new challenge to teachers. While some teacher presume that utilising internet and media social or video-conference tools as platform for online teaching did not pose a real problem, other teachers on the other hand might perceived online teaching as a burden (Quezada, Talbot & Quezada- Parker, 2020).

Job stress can bring negative effect not only to mental but also to physical wellbeing of teachers. Knowing this, it is important for teachers to be able to identified the source of the stressors and take a suitable approach to cope with it. Therefore, it is very crucial that teacher are able to develop proper coping strategies for stress. Coping is the process of responding to a stressors using one or more available techniques or strategies. According to Guglielmi & Tatrow (1998) coping with stress is important for teachers so that their stress does not interfere with the achievement of their educational goals and also to ensure that they can have better quality of life in both personally and professionally.

There are many quantitative researches that has been conducted in the past research on job stress in association with job satisfaction. For instance, a study on job stress and employee satisfaction has been conducted by Iqbal and Waseem (2012). This study was conducted in Pakistan among the air traffic controllers. Yahaya et al (2009) also has conducted a study on occupational stress and the effect on organizational management. A study has been conducted in academic sector by Ling & Bhatti (2014) on job stress and job performance.

Therefore, it seem that there are still lack qualitative of study on job stress in association with coping strategies in education sector.

1.2 Statement of problem

After reviewing the past related research on job stress and coping strategies, researcher has found out that most of the previous research was mainly focus on quantitative study. The highlight of the previous study was to determine the correlation of stressors and coping strategies (Federkeil, et. al, 2020 & MacIntyre et. al, 2020) and also to make conclusion whether coping strategies result in positive or negative outcome toward stressors. However, there are still very few qualitative study about job stress and it coping strategies. Therefore, researcher took the initiative to conduct this study by using qualitative approach to explore more on job stress and coping strategies.

Besides, the past related research were also mainly focused in South Asia and Western context. For example, Klapproth et.al. (2020) conducted a study about teacher's experiences of stress and their coping strategies in Germany. In the same year, MacIntyre, Greferson, and Mercer (2020) has conducted a study about teacher's coping strategies during pandemic in conversion to online teaching. This research also has focused more on language teachers. Also in North Carolina a research was conducted in 2011 by Sprenger (2011) which focused on job satisfaction and stress coping skills of primary school teachers. Bindhu and Sudheeskumar (2006) has conducted a study about job satisfaction and stress coping skills of primary school teacher in India. Therefore, researcher has decided to conduct this study among Malaysian secondary school teachers to explore on what are the stress that faced by local teacher during pandemic and what kind of strategies that the teachers use to cope with the stressors.

Other than that, past related research were also focused on primary school teachers (Sprenger, 2011). For this research, research wanted to conduct the study among secondary school teachers. Researcher wanted to focus more on secondary school teachers because the stress that these teacher were facing might be differ from primary school teacher according to student behavior.

Last but not least, the past related research was also relate job stress with coping behavior and also relate job satisfaction and stress coping skills. Bindu and Sudheeshkumar (2006) focused on the relationship between job satisfaction and stress coping skills among 500 primary school teachers in India. The result of the study has shown a positive relationship that exists between job satisfaction and stress coping skills. While for this study, research will focus more on job stress and coping strategies among secondary school teachers.

1.3 Research Objective

1.3.1 General Objective

To investigate the factors of job stress and coping strategies among secondary school teachers during Covid-19 pandemic.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- To identify the factors of job stress among secondary school teachers during
 Covid-19 pandemic .
- ii. To explore the coping strategies among secondary school teachers during Covid-19 pandemic.

1.4 Research Question

- **RQ 1 :** What are the factor that contribute to job stress among secondary school teachers?
- **RQ 2 :** What strategies do these particular teachers use to cope with their identified stressors?

1.5 Conceptual Definition and Operational Definition

1.5.1 Job Stress

Job stress is a condition that occur when the worker's coping abilities did not match with the work demands (Karasek & Theorell, 1992).

In this study, job stress is a feeling or emotion that is triggered by the challenging work environment.

1.5.2 Coping Strategies

Coping strategies can be defined as the specific efforts, both behavioral and psychological, that people employ to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimize stressful events (Taylor, 1998).

In this study, coping strategies is a strategic effort be it in behavioral or psychological that used by people to cope with the stressors.

1.5.3 Pandemic

According to the Dictionary of Epidemiology, the term pandemic has been defined as an epidemic happen globally, or widespread, crossing international boundaries and usually affecting a large number of people" (Harris, 2000).

In this study, pandemic refer to the outbreak of a new disease that that has spread globally.

1.6 Significance of study

The completion of this study will provide insight into the phenomenon of teacher stress during pandemic. Researcher will encompass in more detail on the possible factors of job stress that has been experienced by teacher due to this pandemic.

Besides, this study also provide the insight and information about stress coping strategies to secondary school teachers. The finding of this study have brought the advantages to teachers on how to effectively cope with stress at work so that they can continually meet educational goals.

Last but not least, the result of this research were also hope gives inputs to the education ministry and department on how to address the problems and challenges faced by teachers during this pandemic. Teachers well-being during this pandemic are really important to ensure the continuity of learning among students and also to ensure the educational goals are achieved. The education ministry also can conduct a training for teacher to enhance their technical skills on digital based teaching.

1.7 Limitation of study

The first limitation of this study is time. The time to conduct the interview is limited since it need to be done according to the informant's availability. During this pandemic, permission to conduct this study in school is also restricted since researcher and school authority need to follow the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).

The second limitation of this study is type of school that this study has been conducted. This study has been conducted among teachers in regular school of public sector. Further research need to be done on teachers that teach in special need school in order to explore the type of stress that that have to face based on their work environment and also the students of special need.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of the study

2.1.1 Job Stress

The word or concept of stress was derived from one of the most well-known stress researcher, which is Hans Selye. Work stress can be defined as emotional disturbance and physical detrimental that occur when the job does not match with the employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAOs), therefore it can be classified as the challenges to a person, be it mentally or physically, and even for the organization.

Arnold and Feldman (1986) has defined stress as a reaction of an individual to a new and bellicose state of work setting (Walonick, 1993). According to William and Huber (1986) stress is a response in both psychologically and physically and also to internal and external catalyst of a state in which the individual's adaptation can be categorized as overextended (Walonick, 1993). Colligan and Higgins (2005) has defined occupational stress as a complicated psychological situation of enigma (Akanji, 2015). The symptom of job stress can be identified when the job does not match the individual's KSAOs, thus result in negative response from the individual in both physical and emotion.

Job stress are varied in many form of reference and it has ingrain the sentiment on people in multiple way. Job pressure can be identified ha son of the significance reference of job stress (Jungwee, 2007). The different between requirement and the potential to give mental security in the family also can be differentiate by job stress (McCubbin and Figley 1983). Job stress also can be perceived as positive and negative

stress, but are dependent on the individual perception of the two forces which is job security on both marital and family lives.

2.1.2 Coping Strategies

Coping strategies has been divided into two categories, which is emotion-focused and problem focused strategies (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). The focus of problem-focused coping was more to find solution to the perceived problem and do something to manage the stress, while emotion-focused coping was more to reduce the stress that cause by emotion or triggered by the situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

A study has proposed that problem-focused coping was more favorable as compared to emotion-focused coping, because problem-focused coping promoted a more healthier psychological functioning (Boni well & Tunariu, 2019). According to Gulwadi (2006), the most common positive coping strategies used by teachers to neutralized stress is via exercise, meditation, hobbies, reading, and social resources. The coping strategies that used by teachers to alleviate stress affect their perception about the situation, therefore altering the opinion of stress (Griffith, Steptoe, & Cropley, 1999).

However, there were also some people that used negative coping strategies to alleviate with stress, it was either intentionally or unintentionally. Negative coping strategies can caused long-term stress because it only provide temporary stress relief. Unhealthy behavior, distraction, violence and withdrawal were the example of negative coping strategies.

2.2 Theory about the study

2.2.1 Coping Theories

The Lazarus model has highlighted coping theory which can be classified into two categories which trait-oriented versus state-oriented, and also microanalytic versus macroanalytic approaches (Krohne, 1996). The trait-oriented and state-oriented research strategies were both different in term of objectives. The objectives of traits-oriented strategy were to identified individual at early stage whose coping resources and propensity are deficient for the requirement of a specific stressful encounter. The personality dimension repression-sensitization were the basic defenses that correspondence with the trait-oriented (Bryne, 1964 & Eriksen, 1966). While on the other hand, the state-oriented research were examined the correlation of coping strategies practice by an individual and the result variables. Besides, microanalytic approaches were aim to highlighted on a sum of number of particular coping strategies, while macroanalytic analysis that were aim to function at higher level of abstraction, and focus more on fundamental constructs.

2.3 Past related findings

The past related studies has shown that the lack of sufficient support in both technical and social regarding the use of technology and social media were the stressors that have been experienced by teacher (Klapproth et al, 2020). The studies done by Klapproth et al (2020) were also investigated the influence of social-demographic factors on level of stress, coping strategies, and experienced barriers. MacIntyre, Greferson, and Mercer (2020) has conducted a quantitative study that correlate the stressors such as stress, well-being, and negative emotions with coping strategies.

Besides, the finding of past studies done by Sprenger (2011) has showed that the most frequent source of stress experienced by primary school teacher was the unrealistic expectation set by both school officials and parents. The outcomes of the research also indicated that primary school teacher were mostly employ neutral coping behaviors to cope with the stressors and followed by positive coping behaviors and negative coping behaviors (Sprenger, 2011)

According to Bindhu & Sudheeskumar (2006), job satisfaction is the desirable and undesirable subjective feeling with which employees view their work. The compatibility of job requirement, demands, and expectation of employees are the catalyst that may result to job satisfaction (Biddhu & Sudheeskumar (2006). Past related studies done by Bindhu & Sudhesskumar (2006) indicated that the internal and external of the school environment were the factors that contribute to job satisfaction and stress. This study also highlighted on teachers ability to cope with stress to perform effectively.

CHAPTER 3:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The approach that has been used to conduct this study was qualitative approach. Researcher has decided to use exploratory research design to conduct this study in order to explore more deeper about the topic. According to Saunders et al (2007), exploratory research is conducted when enough is not known about a phenomenon and a problem that has not been clearly defined. Researcher has choose exploratory as research design because this type of research design aim to explore more on the research topic to provide profundity of the research topic. Secondly, exploratory type of research design also can help to improve researcher's understanding and knowledge about the topic or study conducted thus enable research to explain and determine more on why and how things happen.

3.2 Population, Sample & Sampling procedure

The population for this study has focuses on the secondary school teachers of SMK Padawan, from all different ages, gender, and fields. Researcher has decided to focuses on teachers from different ages, gender, and fields because the factors of stress might be varied for each teacher according to their ages, gender and fields. A sample means a specific group in which the data will be collected. When a population size are too big to conduct the study or test, sample will be used to select a number of individual from the population size. For this study, minimum six informants has been selected as sample via convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling in which the informants was selected because they are the suitable sources of data in which the research area are concern.

3.3 Instrument of study

The instruments that has been used for this study is semi-structured interview and open-ended questions. The flexibility of semi-structured interview gives the opportunity to researcher to explore more on the issues that has been raised by the informants during the interview session. Researcher also used open-ended questions to interview the informants. Some unpredicted response and issues may surface through the use of open-ended questioning (Tod, 2006). However, due to Movement Control Order (MCO), researches has decided to conduct the interview session with the informants via online platform such as zoom meeting and the session also has been recorded in audio form.

3.4 Credibility

Credibility refer to the validity of the data and informant response and the exposition and presentation made by the research based on the sources (Polit & Beck, 2012). Credibility is intensity by the researcher explaining his or her understanding about the phenomena or experience and confirm the research findings with the informant. To support credibility when reporting a qualitative study, researcher should show deep engagement and observation when conducting the interview with the informants, and also audit trails.

3.5 Research Ethics

In order to conduct this research, letter of permission that has been signed by the research supervisor was submitted to the organization to obtain approval from the management of the organization. After that, researcher will proceed with explaining the intent and subjective of the research to the informants, researcher will ask the consent of the informants to participate in this research. However, informants was also allow to