

## Occupational Stress on Job Performance of Office Work-Based Employees in Malaysia's Port

Ahmad Nur Azam Ahmad Ridzuan<sup>1</sup>, Norlida Zakirai@Zakaria<sup>2</sup>,  
Erratul Shela Eshak<sup>2</sup>, Munirah Mohd Jidi<sup>2</sup>, Norida Abu Bakar<sup>2</sup>,  
Nur Faithzah Jamian<sup>2</sup> and Amirudin Mohd Zani<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Computer and Mathematical Sciences, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Perak Branch,  
Tapah Campus, Perak, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Melaka Branch, Alor  
Gajah Campus, Melaka, Malaysia

<sup>3</sup>Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Terengganu Branch,  
Dungun Campus, Terengganu, Malaysia

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### Abstract

This study was conducted to examine the impact of Occupational Stress on Job Performance of office work-based employee in one of Malaysia's port. It also aims to recognize the main factors of Occupational Stress that will affect the performance of the employees. The dependent variable was job performance, while the independent variables were role ambiguity, role conflict, inadequate resources (facility) and workload. This study used a quantitative survey method, and data was collected using a set of structured questionnaires. The respondents involved were those working in office environment that perform administrative duties. The finding was analyzed using Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis to reveal the result of independent and dependent variables. The findings show that role ambiguity, role conflict and workload were contributed to the employee job performance, whereas inadequate resources (facility) was not contribute to the employee job performance. Some recommendations were suggested such as clarification on job specification on the early tenure, encouragement in work collaboration and educate employees on time management and task priorities.

**Keywords:** *Occupational Stress, Job Performance*

### Background of Study

Over the last two decades, Malaysian international trade has risen rapidly due to the increased of export-oriented development (Jeevan, Ghaderi, Bandara, Saharuddin, & Othman, December 2015). In addition, increases of stress level faced by employees nowadays are affected by economic factors. The revolutions of communications and internet have made companies all over the world becoming more productive than ever, and can now conducted

business worldwide which would give a benefit to the companies and lead to a greater competition, but in another hand, it will result pressure to the employee. People globally are employed and face a continuous and challenging problem in the organization which influences employee's performance and efficiency.

Occupational stress which is also known as job stress is exactly a response towards harmful physical and emotional that usually occur when the demands of the job do not match the abilities or needs of the workers (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). Working more than shifts hour, performing non-well-train work, exposure to highly emotional or psychologically challenging issues, loss of benefits or even dealing with inequality, or unethical acts in workplace are the causes of occupational stress (Rivera, 2014). Inequality in one's life can happen since stress leads to depression damages health attitude and work behavior (Ali, Raheem, Nawaz, & Imamuddin, 2014). As mentioned by Morin (2015), there are differences between stress and pressure.

Stress referred to a situation of too many loads and inadequate 2 resources to meet them such as time, money, and energy, involved diversity of harms that lead to approaches of overload. While pressure is a state in which people identify that something at stake is reliant on the result of their performance (Morin, 2015). The nature of the work in service organizations which requires employees to face countless types of customer's deeds leads stress matter to becomes a phenomenon (Alwi, Azmi, & Md. Shahid, 2012) and with Northport (Malaysia) Bhd. as one of the largest multi-purpose ports and its reputation as Malaysia's "World Port", Northport must strengthen its ability to provide the most wide-ranging global shipping connectivity compared with any other ports in the country (Northport, 2016). Therefore, this study was conducted to discover the impact of the Occupational Stress towards Job Performance of office work-based employee at Northport (Malaysia) Bhd.

### **Problem Statement**

In order to maintain Northport (Malaysia) Bhd. reputation as Malaysia's "World Port" which holds such a high standard of port services plus to achieve their vision and mission, give challenge for employee in the management. Due to the increase numbers of port trade, Northport (Malaysia) Bhd. faces drawback of port capacity, such as long cargo dwelling times and long ship turnaround times. This problem can be overcome if the values, technology and port physical capacity in line with port volume were improve by port management (Jeevan, Ghaderi, Bandara, Saharuddin, & Othman, December 2015).

This study was conducted because the problem itself taken various difficulties among today's employees mainly by office work-based employees. Occupational stress issue give a huge effect to employees, organization and customers since office work-based employees must be aware in allowing emotionally-based behavior to be part of the services delivery encounter (Alwi, Azmi, & Md. Shahid, 2012). In order to maintain Northport's reputation and to achieve customer satisfaction, since, every services organization nowadays are competing to gain a competitive advantage over other competitors, management have to concentrate on providing maximum value services and ensure the employees ethical for more satisfying results. Their performance and efficiency will be affected by the challenge since their burden was increased. This burden is also review as stress and could affect the operation at Northport. Due to this problem, employee will usually get distract to focus on their job and unable to perform successfully. Stress could ruin everyone health. When this happen towards Northport's employee, they will probably take medical leave (MC) as well take an emergency

leave (EL). All this would affect Northport's operation and time management. These would jeopardize Northport's reputation as the largest multipurpose ports in Malaysia. Stress might be viewed as a negative impact on employees' performance but at the same time, some stressful work conditions are required to keep employees productive. Furthermore, different people faced different level of stress because all human being do not possess similar kind of pressure.

## **Literature**

### ***Occupational Stress***

Stress results when a person had to poses challenge or threat, it also could affect human's individual ability which will interrupt the researcher psychological equilibrium. Occupational stress as mentioned by Keith Hillman (2015) is the most mutual sources for many people especially when it is hard to change jobs due to economic factor and it can also cause a wide range of different health conditions. Many studies had been done regarding on the effect of occupational stress such as study done by Masoud Lotfizadeh, Namaitijiang Mainaiti and Noor Hassim Ismail on Occupational Stress Among White Collar Steel Company in Iran (2014) which they found that, any activity that are related to economic problem is the main sources of stress which is 59%. They also mentioned that low productivity, absenteeism, and increased rates of accidents on and off the job have something to do with occupational stress and stressful working condition (Lotfizadeh, Maimait, & Ismail, 2014). According to K.P. Mani, Dr.R. Sritharan and Dr.R. Gayatri (2014), stress regularly contributes burnout, risk of accidents and illness like hyper tension, coronary heart disease and severe depression to the workers which will leads them to experience poor quality of performance, lower job satisfaction, high turnover and increased work absence or lack of concentration on the job (Mani, Sritharan, & Gayatri, 2014). Moreover, physiological, emotional, and social levels, and in their free time and family life, could effect on individual. In addition, stress can happen in a short term response, which individual who encompass with high demands of job and low job control could resulted in high blood pressure (Olusegun, Oluwasayo, & Olawoyim, 2014).

### ***Job Performance***

Job performance can be defined as how well someone performs their job. Job performance is also known as employees' behaviors value where they distinguished in the extent to which they help or hinder the organization over the course of a set period of time and the outcomes of unique behaviors are rarely measured so their value is expected (Bullock, 2013). It can be said that, what people do at work and having a property of behavior is viewed as performance. According to Mohammed (2001), (as cited in Jaradat, Nagresh, AlShegran, & Jadellah, 2013), performance denotes to the degree of achievement and completion of the task of the individual which reflects the way people achieve it or how they perform the job requirements. If the employee themselves satisfied with the outcomes of their work, slightly, their performance will boost up that can be dignified such as commitment, obligation, attitudes and more.

### ***Role Ambiguity***

According to Grobelna (2015), role ambiguity is defined as a stressful situation due to employees' misunderstanding concerning expectations of what their responsibilities are and lack of info regarding appropriate actions in a given situation. Role ambiguity includes general expectations which bring about negative work involvements; because, any situation in

organizations that happens but not knowing exactly what to do cause individuals to face stress (Yesiltas, 2014). In addition, the lack of role definitions or insufficient communication of role descriptions to the employees leads these types of role to occur.

### **Role Conflict**

Role conflict usually occurs when there are too many demands requested from customers, colleagues or a manager at the same time and the employee cannot fulfil all of them (as cited in Yesiltas, 2014). In addition, when in a place somewhere to live setting up, individuals come across demands more than their capabilities resulting in role conflicts, thus, resulted in experiencing role stress. In relation to employee in workplace, role conflict happens when workers meet expectations away from the obligations by the manager. Plus, taking instruction from numerous managers and conflict of these instructions may cause role conflict in the organizations.

### **Inadequate Resources**

Inadequate resources in terms of insufficient staffing are one of the top causes of work stress. As mentioned by Crush (2014), the degree of absenteeism is heavily affected by stress. Mostly, stressed staff took a higher average of medical leave per year, compared to worker that low-stresses employees took. Stressed staff that came to work, highly being unproductive in workplace compare to those workers whom experience low-stresses (Crush, 2014).

### **Workload**

According to a study by Jones et al. (2007), (as cited in Hashemi, Jusoh, Kiumarsi, & Mohammadi, 2015), role overload is theoretically distinct from role stressors, role conflict and role ambiguity. In addition, Jones revealed (as cited in Hashemi, Jusoh, Kiumarsi, & Mohammadi, 2015) that role overload is the level of pressure to which an employee finds him or herself because of numerous duties and responsibilities.

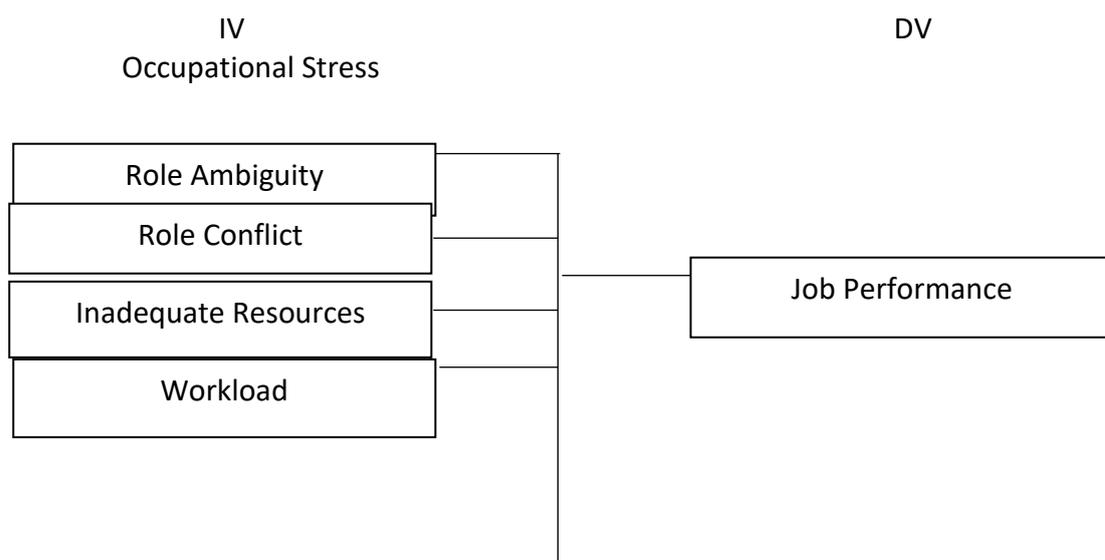


Figure 1: Conceptual framework on relationship between Occupational Stress and Job Performance. Adapted from Kim, Muller, & Watson (1996)

**RESEARCH METHOD**

A simple random sampling method was used that yielded 169 responses from 300 population size. These responses were collected from office work-based employee at Northport (M) Bhd. According to Sekaran (2003), a probability sampling technique can help researcher to reduce bias and offer more generalizability in the research.

The measurement instrument for this study was a structural self-administered questionnaire. The scales of measurements were adapted from the literature (Rizzo et al, 1970; Kim, Muller & Watson, 1996; Ouyang, 2009; Tang & Chang, 2010; Azmi, Shahid & Alwi, 2012). Only related and relevant scales to role ambiguity, role conflict, inadequate resources and workload were adapted for independent variables and some scales were adapted by changing the words and sentences that indicated job performance as the dependant variable.

Category scale questions about respondent's demographic profile such as gender, age, marital status and job profile (years of tenure) were asked in the first section. Meanwhile, the second and third section, a 5-point rating scales was used, ranging from 1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 5 = "Strongly Agree".

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

*RO<sup>1</sup>: To investigate the relationship between element of Occupational Stress and Job Performance of office work-based employee at Northport (Malaysia) Bhd.*

Table 1.0: Pearson Correlation

		Role Ambiguity	Role Conflict	Inadequate Resources	Workload	Job Performance
Role ambiguity	Pearson Correlation Sig.(2-Tailed) N	1  125				
<i>Role conflict</i>	<i>Pearson Correlation Sig.(2-Tailed) N</i>	<i>.151 .092 125</i>	<i>1  125</i>			
Inadequate resources	Pearson Correlation Sig.(2-Tailed) N	-.070 .435 125	.295** .001 125	1  125		
workload	Pearson Correlation Sig.(2-Tailed) N	.085 .344 125	.529** .000 125	.359** .000 125	1  125	

Job performance	Pearson Correlation	.567** .000	.238** .008	.113 .209	.322* .000	1
	Sig.(2-Tailed)					
	N	125	125	125	125	125

**\*\*.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There is a significant relationship between Role Ambiguity and Job Performance since the P-value is 0.000, less than 0.01. It shows the r equal to 0.567 implies that there is a moderate correlation between Role Ambiguity and Job Performance. The Pearson coefficient also indicated a positive relationship, this mean Role Ambiguity improves, and Job Performances are improved too. There is a significant relationship of Role Conflict and Job Performance as the p value, 0.008 is less than 0.01, but the correlation is weak as  $r = 0.238$ . The Pearson coefficient also indicates a positive relationship, which mean, as Role Conflict improves, Job Performance will increase. Furthermore, for Inadequate Resources and Job Performance, it was found that there is no significant relationship as the P-value is more than 0.01, which is 0.209; therefore, there is no relationship between Inadequate Resources and Job Performance. There is a significant relationship between Workload and Job Performance as P-value is 0.000 which is less than 0.01. There is also a weak relationship between workload and job performance as  $r = 0.322$ . The Pearson coefficient also indicates a positive relationship which means, improve in Workload will slightly increases Job Performance.

*RO<sup>2</sup>: To identify which of the dimension is highly influence on job performance.*

Second objective is The F-ratio in the ANOVA table above indicates whether the overall regression model is a good fit for the data. Table 4.13 shows that the independent variables (Role Ambiguity, Role Conflict, Inadequate Resources and Workload) for this study is considered statistically significantly predict the dependent variable (Job Performance), since the value of significant; P-value is less than 0.01, which is 0.000. Therefore, the regression model for this study is a good fit of data ( $F [4, 120] = 20.003, P < 0.01$ ).

Table 1.1: Coefficient correlation

Model	unstandardize coefficients		standardize coefficients		t
	B	Std Error	Beta	Sig	
1 (Constant)	15.214	3.128		4.865 0.00	
Role ambiguity		.701 .092	.549	7.612 0.00	
Role conflict		.004 .089	.004	.047 .962	
Inadequate resources	.130	.167	.060	.780 .437	
workload		.444 .152	.252	2.921 .004	

Table 1.1 shows the result of coefficient of the independent variable, (Occupational Stress) of Job Performance of office work-based employees at Northport (Malaysia) Bhd. From the table above, it shows that only Role Ambiguity and Workload are significantly influences the Job

Performance since the P-value is 0.000 and 0.004, respectively which both less than 0.01. As for Role Conflict and Inadequate Resources, it is not influences on the Job Performance because both P-values are more than 0.01, (Role Conflict = 0.962; Inadequate Resources = 0.437).

*RO<sup>3</sup>: To find out which element of Occupational Stress have the highest influence on the Job Performance of office work-based employee in Northport (Malaysia) Bhd.*

To achieve the third research objective, which to identify the most influences element of independent variables (Occupational Stress) on dependent variables (Job Performance), beta column is viewed. Noted only Role Ambiguity and Workload have significant values, but from beta column, it shows that Role Ambiguity have the highest amount of beta; 0.549, compared to Workload; 0.252. This can be concluded that, Role Ambiguity is the element of Occupational Stress that is extremely influences Job Performance of office work-based employees in Northport (Malaysia) Bhd. In conclusion, for this study, a multiple regression was run to predict the performance of office work-based employees at Northport (Malaysia) Bhd. From the impact of Role Ambiguity, Role Conflict, Inadequate Resources and Workload, and from observation, only Role Ambiguity and Workload are statistically significantly predicting Job Performance,  $F(4, 120) = 20.003$ ,  $R^2 = 0.400$ . Because on these two variables show statistically significantly to the prediction,  $P < 0.01$ . But, Role Ambiguity is the mostly influence element of Occupational Stress on Job Performance of office work-based employee in Northport (Malaysia) Bhd.

### **Conclusion**

From the findings, it shows that majority of the respondent for the study is male, since they hold the highest frequency, 73 (58.4%). Regard to age, 49 (39.2%) of them were in the range of 21-30 years old and is already married, 86 (67.2%). It had been found that 49 (39.2%) of the respondent have served for more than 7 years in the organization. For reliability analysis, it was concluded that overall variables producing reliable data, since the Cronbach's alpha for overall variable is 0.874 meaning that all of items are correlated to each other.

The study also has found that most of the respondent agreed that, Role Ambiguity is the primary element contributing to Occupational Stress which affected their Job Performance in office. This analysis answered the first objective of the study. Northport's employee might have lack of communication, they did not argue when receiving any instruction that give unclear job description which will then results a stressful situation in organizations. While respondent did not agree that Inadequate Resources affect their Job Performance maybe due to facilities in Northport (Malaysia) Bhd. are all provided sufficiently and it has nothing to stress off. This data will then help researcher to achieve second research objective which lead researcher to accept null hypothesis where, there is no relationship between Inadequate Resources and Job Performance of Office work-based employees in Northport since the significant value were more than 0.01. However other remaining elements in Occupational Stress (Role Ambiguity, Role Conflict and Workload) accepted the alternative hypothesis.

Multiple regressions were used by researcher to achieve the third research objective, which is to find out most influences factor that affect office work-based employee's Job Performance. In conclusion, Role Ambiguity was the elements that gave most influence to their Job Performance. This is because Role Ambiguity has P-value which is less than 0.01 and have higher beta compared to others element.

**Recommendation**

After the conclusions had viewed, several recommendations should be carry out which could help both employees and Northport (M) Bhd. to maintain the workers' performance even though these employees undergo stress. Backward analysis was carry out by measuring each mean for all questions for independent variable (Role Ambiguity, Role Conflict, Inadequate Resources and Workload). The first rank and the last rank are considered for researcher to make a recommendation. In the first rank requires researcher to sustain and strengthen the element, and the last rank, requires researcher to improve Occupational Stress for better Job Performance. To summarize base on the statistical data of mean and standard deviation for all independent variable, it shows that Role Ambiguity is the most agreed by the respondent. They know their responsibilities in the organization, thus Northport (Malaysia) Bhd. should strengthen this to avoid the employee to experience ambiguity that would slightly affect the performance to the company. Lower ranking indicate that the item should be improvise to avoid any decreasing in job performance of Northport's employee to occur which could affect the company operation. Thus, for Role Ambiguity, with mean score; 3.456 for "I feel certain about how much authority I have" require managers to treat them as part of the group by having a discussion regarding on the goals of the company, possible plan for the change in economic condition and communicated with them on how to improve operation and develop new strategies (Llyod, 2012).

Role Conflict, with mean score of 3.608 for "I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently", allows employees to understand the flow of work happening in the organization rather than understand their own workflow. Northport should encourage these because team that work collaboration, can obtain greater resources and recognition when facing competition for finite resources. Role Conflict, with the lowest mean score, 2.784 with standard deviation of 1.132 for "I work on unnecessary things". For employees themselves, they should speak up whenever receiving works that are unnecessary, clearly and directly without being rude. Inadequate resources with mean 3.432 and standard deviation of 0.910 for "I have enough equipment to do my work", indicates that if the company itself couldn't be responsible to provide these resources, then possibly it should consider the likelihood of these goals for the employee to be achieved (Puleo, 2015). Having plenty of equipment allow employee to perform task smoothly, therefore, Northport should always prepare for the facilities in the organization to avoid job stacking. For Inadequate Resources, with the lowest mean value of 2.792 and standard deviation of 1.034 for "I don't have adequate space to do my work" tells that space is important for the employee to carry out task. This is because space have their own psychological meaning, where more space indicates signify importance, respect and more authority, this mean that space have something to do with employee status. Meanwhile, workload with mean value of 3.960 with standard deviation of 0.807 holds the first rank for "I have to react fast in my job". Northport should reward employee who are able to maintain their performance in a completion time so that they will get more encouraged to react fast in their job. Therefore, workload with mean score of 3.312 and standard deviation of 1.066 which is the last rank for "I have insufficient time frame to get everything done on my job", require Northport to encourage employee to accomplish goals within period given. Educate them the ability to differentiate task according to the priority which will then help them to focus mainly in the task with the highest priority before performing other task with lower priority that are not contributing to the employee goals or objective.

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### Corresponding Author

Nur Faithzah Jamian is a lecturer from Faculty of Business Management of UiTM, Melaka Branch, Alor Gajah Campus. Her official email is [faithzah@melaka.uitm.edu.my](mailto:faithzah@melaka.uitm.edu.my).

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