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**THE FACTORS THAT CAUSE STRESS AMONG A MULTINATIONAL
CALL CENTRE COMPANY WORKERS IN KLANG VALLEY**

By

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**Thesis Submitted to
Othman Yeop Abdullah Graduate School of Business
Universiti Utara Malaysia,
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Master of Science
(Occupational Safety & Health Management)**



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine the factors that cause stress among customer care officers (CCOs) at an inbound call centre in Klang Valley. The independent variables are perceived organizational support, workload and customer verbal aggression while the dependent variable is occupational stress. This study also determine the level of work stress faced by the employees. A total of 94 employees participated in this study by answering survey questionnaire. Data was collected through 61 items questionnaires on a five-point Likert and another 12 items were demographic questions. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (correlation and multiple regressions). The finding from this study showed that perceived organizational support, workload and customer verbal aggression have a significant relationship with occupational stress. The study also revealed that the overall work stress among respondents were moderate. Meanwhile, based on multiple regression result, 39.7% of the occupational stress is explained by the factors studied. The most influential factor is workload, followed by customer verbal aggression and least influencing factor is perceived organizational support. This study would like to suggest to human resource managers of the call centre to reduce the stress level among CCOs by implementing stress reducing mechanism such as stress reduction workshops and exercises, counselling, team building, giving more breaks in between calls and also rotating their shifts. Besides that, this study may also be beneficial to Department of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) in Malaysia, since occupational stress is one of the occupational disease. This study will give an idea for DOSH to formulate new strategies and improve the enforcement of OSH in the workplace.

Keywords: customer care officers, occupational stress, perceived organizational support, call centre

ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan tekanan di kalangan pegawai perkhidmatan pelanggan (CCO) di sebuah pusat panggilan *inbound* di Lembah Klang. Pembolehubah bebas adalah sokongan organisasi yang dirasakan, beban kerja dan keagresifan verbal oleh pelanggan dan pembolehubah bergantung adalah tekanan kerja. Kajian ini juga menentukan tahap tekanan kerja yang dihadapi oleh pekerja. Sebanyak 94 pekerja mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini dengan menjawab soal selidik. Data dikumpul melalui 61 item soal selidik pada 5 skala Likert dan 21 item adalah soalan demografi. Data dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif (min dan sisihan piawai) dan statistik inferential (korelasi dan regresi berganda). Hasil daripada kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa sokongan organisasi yang dirasakan, beban kerja dan keagresifan verbal oleh pelanggan mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan tekanan kerja. . Kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa tekanan kerja keseluruhan di kalangan responden adalah sederhana. Sementara itu, berdasarkan keputusan regresi berganda, 39.7% tekanan kerja diterangkan oleh faktor yang dikaji. Faktor yang paling mempengaruhi adalah beban kerja, diikuti oleh keagresifan verbal oleh pelanggan, dan faktor yang paling kurang mempengaruhi adalah sokongan organisasi yang dirasakan. Kajian ini juga ingin mencadangkan kepada pengurus-pengurus sumber manusia di pusat panggilan untuk mengurangkan tahap tekanan di kalangan CCO dengan melaksanakan mekanisme pengurangan tekanan seperti bengkel pengurangan tekanan dan senaman, kaunseling, pembinaan pasukan, memberi lebih banyak masa rehat di antara panggilan dan juga pertukan syif kerja. Selain itu, kajian ini juga boleh memberi manfaat kepada Jabatan Keselamatan dan Kesihatan Pekerjaan (DOSH) di Malaysia, kerana tekanan kerja adalah salah satu penyakit pekerjaan. Kajian ini akan memberikan idea kepada pihak DOSH untuk merangka strategi baru dan meningkatkan penguatkuasaan OSH di tempat kerja.

Kata kunci: pegawai perkhidmatan pelanggan, tekanan kerja, sokongan organisasi yang dirasakan, pusat panggilan

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My deepest gratitude and sincere thanks to Assoc. Prof. Dr Mohd Faizal Mohd Isa and Mr Syazwan Syah Zulkifly who had agreed to be my supervisor and advisor. Their knowledge and guidance have greatly helped me at all steps in the process of preparing and submitting this research paper. Without their comments and untiring advice, this thesis would not have been completed successfully.

A special thanks goes to my mother, Madam Ramayee and my beloved husband, Mr Surendran, for their endless patience, greatest support and understanding while I go through this challenging and difficult journey. My sincere gratitude to Ms Bavani, who helped me in the distribution and collection of the questionnaire to the customer care officers. My sincere gratitude also goes to my friends Ms Malarvzelly , Ms Shantini and Mr Syed, who have given me motivation, advice and support in preparing and submitting this research paper.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere and utmost appreciation to my other lecturers and UUM staffs whom have inputted me valuable knowledge during my studies and also not forgetting to all those involved in making this paper a reality.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of study

According to Cox and Brockley (1984), stress originated based on comparison between demands and ability of an individual to deliver the task completely and successfully. Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey and Toth (1997), has stated that stress is a mental feeling when job duties are exceeding a person's capabilities. These mental feeling creates symptoms of stress such as anxiety and tension.

Work related stress is a global issue. Due to globalization and global financial crisis, occupational stress is increasing not only in almost all countries, but all professions, categories of workers, families and societies (Mohajan, 2012). Clarke and Cooper (2000) has stated that occupational stress is considered a risk-assessable disease in Europe. Research from Capita Employee Benefits in 2016 revealed that 70 percent of those surveyed cited stress as one of their top five hazards at work (Insight magazine, 2016). Based on a report by Consumer News and Business Channel, CNBC (2018), 70 percent of the workers experienced stress in the workplace. Findings from American Psychological Association in 2017 (APA, 2017) has revealed that 58 percent of Americans say work is a significant source of stress. It has also revealed that occupational stress costs U.S employers an estimated 300 billion per year annually through absenteeism, illness and productivity.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE SET



COLLEGE OF BUSINESS UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA

Dear respected respondents:

You are invited to participate in this research entitled “The factors that lead to stress among customer care officers in Klang Valley”. I hope you could complete the questionnaire honestly and carefully as it will influence the result of the research.

Information obtained from this questionnaire **WILL BE TREATED STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL** and will be used solely for academic purposes.

Thank you for your time in responding to this questionnaire.

Your participation is highly appreciated. Have a good day.

Yours sincerely,

.....

SUMATHI THACHANAMURTHY

Master of Science

(Occupational Safety and Health Management)

UUM KL

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please tick in the bracket, or fill in the space provided.

SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

1. Gender	Male () Female ()
2. Age	_____ years
3. Citizenship	Malaysian () Non-citizen ()
4. Race	Malay () Chinese () Indian () Others ()
5. Education	SPM () STPM () Diploma () Bachelor () Masters () others _____ please specify
6. Marital status	Married () Single () Widowed/Divorced () Number of kids (if any) _____
7. Employment	Permanent () Contract ()
8. Position	Junior level () Team leader ()
9. Years of service	_____ year (s)
10. Working hours per day	_____hour(s)
11. Shift work	Do you work on shift? Yes () No ()
12. Work schedule	Which of the following best describes your usual work schedule? Day shift () Afternoon shift () Night shift ()

SECTION 2: EMPLOYEE STRESS LEVEL

Please circle the appropriate response based on the scale. Please keep your response general to yourself as a whole and please answer all questions as honest as possible.

1 - Never; 2 - Rarely; 3 - Sometimes; 4- Often; 5- Always

No	Statement					
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	I fell little enthusiasm for doing my job.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I feel tired even with adequate sleep.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I feel frustrated in carrying out my responsibilities at work.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I am moody, irritable, or impatient over small inconveniences.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I want to withdraw from the constant demands on my time and energy.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I feel negative, futile, or depressed about my job.	1	2	3	4	5
7	My decision-making ability seems less than usual.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I think that I am not as efficient as I should be.	1	2	3	4	5
9	The quality of my work is less than it should be.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I feel physically depleted.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I feel emotionally depleted.	1	2	3	4	5
12	I feel spiritually depleted.	1	2	3	4	5
13	My resistance to illness is lowered.	1	2	3	4	5

14	My interest in sex is lowered.	1	2	3	4	5
15	I am eating more in order to cope with my job.	1	2	3	4	5
16	I am eating less in order to cope with my job.	1	2	3	4	5
17	I am smoking more cigarettes in order to cope with my job.	1	2	3	4	5
18	I am using more alcohol in order to cope with my job.	1	2	3	4	5
19	I am feeling emotionally callous (indifferent) about the problems and needs of others.	1	2	3	4	5
20	My communication with my boss seems strained.	1	2	3	4	5
21	My communication with my co-workers seems strained.	1	2	3	4	5
22	My communication with my family seems strained.	1	2	3	4	5
23	I am forgetful.	1	2	3	4	5
24	I am having difficulty concentrating.	1	2	3	4	5
25	I am easily bored.	1	2	3	4	5
26	I feel a sense of dissatisfaction, of something wrong or missing.	1	2	3	4	5
27	When I ask myself why I get up and go to work, the only answer that occurs is "my pay check."	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION 3: FACTORS CAUSING STRESS

Please **CIRCLE** the appropriate response based on the scale that best describes your response. Please keep your response general to yourself as a whole and please answer all questions objectively and as honest as possible.

1-Strongly disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Neutral, 4-Agree, 5 – Strongly agree

PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
No	Statement					
1	The organization values my contribution to its well being	1	2	3	4	5
2	If the organization could hire someone to replace me at a lower salary it would do so.	1	2	3	4	5
3	The organization fails to appreciate any extra effort from me.	1	2	3	4	5
4	The organization strongly considers my goals and values.	1	2	3	4	5
5	The organization would ignore any complaint from me.	1	2	3	4	5
6	The organization disregards my best interest when it makes decisions that affect me.	1	2	3	4	5
7	Help is available from the organization when I have a problem.	1	2	3	4	5
8	The organization really cares about my well-being.	1	2	3	4	5
9	Even if I did the best job possible, the organization would fail to notice.	1	2	3	4	5
10	The organization is willing to help me when I need a special favour.	1	2	3	4	5
11	The organization cares about my general satisfaction at work.	1	2	3	4	5
12	If given the opportunity, the organization would take advantage of me.	1	2	3	4	5
13	The organization shows very little concern for me.	1	2	3	4	5
14	The organization cares about my opinions.	1	2	3	4	5
15	The organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work.	1	2	3	4	5
16	The organization tries to make my job as interesting as possible.	1	2	3	4	5

WORKLOAD		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	The pace in my job is too fast.	1	2	3	4	5
2	My job is too demanding.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I have too much to do on the job.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I am expected to do too many different tasks at the same time.	1	2	3	4	5
5	My work day often involves “responding to crisis” rather than accomplishing my planned activities.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I often take my “work-related problems” home with me.	1	2	3	4	5
7	My job is very hectic.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I do not have time to do the work that must be done.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I work intensely for prolonged periods of time.	1	2	3	4	5
10	After work I come home too tired to do the things I like to.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I have so much work to do on the job that it takes me away from my personal interests.	1	2	3	4	5
12	I have enough time to do what’s important in my job.	1	2	3	4	5
13	I leave my work behind when I go home at the end of the workday.	1	2	3	4	5
CUSTOMER VERBAL AGGRESSION						
1	Customers often shout at us.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Customers personally attack us verbally.	1	2	3	4	5
3	Customers are always complaining about us.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Customers get angry at us even over minor matters.	1	2	3	4	5
5	Some customers argue all the time.	1	2	3	4	5

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE

THANK YOU!

APPENDIX B: RELIABILITY ANALYSIS

Reliability Analysis for Pilot Study

Reliability result for

a) Occupational Stress

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	32	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	32	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.908	27

b) Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	32	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	32	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.941	16

c) Workload

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	32	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	32	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.758	13

d) Customer Verbal Aggression (CVA)

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	32	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	32	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.794	5

Reliability Analysis for Current Study

a) Occupational Stress

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	94	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	94	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.888	27

b) Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	94	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	94	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.957	16

c) Workload

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	94	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	94	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.839	13

d) Customer Verbal Aggression CVA

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	94	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	94	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.796	5

Appendix C: Mean and Standard Deviation for all variables

Statistics

		Occupational Stress (OS)	Perceived Organizational Support (POS)	Workload (WL)	Customer Verbal Aggression (CVA)
N	Valid	94	94	94	94
	Missing	13	13	13	13
Mean		2.5374	3.1928	3.3429	4.0681
Std. Deviation		.58869	.84886	.65705	.75665

Appendix D: Correlation Analysis

Correlations

		Perceived Organizational Support (POS)	Workload (WL)	Customer Verbal Aggression (CVA)	Occupational Stress (OS)
Perceived Organizational Support (POS)	Pearson Correlation	1	-.360**	-.297**	-.456**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.004	.000
	N	94	94	94	94
Workload (WL)	Pearson Correlation	-.360**	1	.264*	.499**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.010	.000
	N	94	94	94	94
Customer Verbal Aggression (CVA)	Pearson Correlation	-.297**	.264*	1	.426**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.010		.000
	N	94	94	94	94
Occupational Stress (OS)	Pearson Correlation	-.456**	.499**	.426**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	94	94	94	94

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

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Appendix F: Multiple Regression Analysis

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.630 ^a	.397	.376	.46487

a. Predictors: (Constant), Customer Verbal Aggression (CVA), Workload (WL), Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	12.781	3	4.260	19.714	.000 ^b
	Residual	19.449	90	.216		
	Total	32.230	93			

a. Dependent Variable: Occupational Stress (OS)

b. Predictors: (Constant), Customer Verbal Aggression (CVA), Workload (WL), Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.274	.470		2.711	.008
	Perceived Organizational Support (POS)	-.179	.062	-.258	-2.859	.005
	Workload (WL)	.302	.080	.337	3.779	.000
	Customer Verbal Aggression (CVA)	.203	.068	.261	2.990	.004

a. Dependent Variable: Occupational Stress (OS)

