

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Individual in this modern world have experienced increasing stress in their personal and work lives because of multiple roles in society that has become more complex.

According to Mustacchi (1990) there are 3 types of stress;

- i. Emotional stress which is generally perceived to be an imbalance between environmental demands and a person's ability to meet them. Stress is not just an environmental condition but an interaction of a particular external environment and a particular person; thus, not every person will evaluate and react to a situation in the same way.
- ii. Socio cultural stress which can be explained by the hypothesis that stress raises hypertension prevalence is supported by the observation. For example; average blood pressures of African Americans living in high-stress areas where unemployment, crime, and crowded conditions are ongoing features of the environment are higher than those residing in low stress neighbourhoods.
- iii. Occupational stress is threats that lead to feelings of insecurity and inadequacy. There may also be an element of time pressure with the need to meet deadlines and to fulfil commitments at an accelerated pace. The feeling of distress associated with such situations becomes more intense when workers feel trapped at the receiving end of a command line that they cannot question. Notable stress reactions have been observed in

workers confronted with conflicting directives often inherent in the ambiguity of their professional roles.

According to Daniels (2004), British government has labelled occupational stress as a major health problem and commercial issue, costing the UK economy an estimated £3.7 billion per year (1995/96). This type of stress is also a major problem for both individual employees and organizations, and can lead to burnout, illness, labour turnover, absenteeism, poor morale and reduced efficiency and performance. Work-related stress is estimated to be the biggest occupational health problem in the United Kingdom (UK), after musculoskeletal disorders such as back problems and stress related sickness absences cost an estimated £4 billion annually (Edwards and Burnard, 2004).

A survey done by Northwestern National Life indicted that 40% of American workers perceived their jobs as extremely stressful (U.S Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). The estimated cost of stress related illnesses in U.S industry was reported in 1995 as approximately \$13,000 per employee in any profession per year and the cost is expected to accelerate further if the matter is not properly tackled (Bruhn, Chesney and Salcido, 1995).

Employee participation in the development and improvement of their own work activities and daily production tasks has been strongly emphasized by the “quality movement”. Development of work should be consistent with improvement in the characteristics that represent good and rewarding work. Several empirical field studies confirm that improvements in work and company performance take place as a

result. There is also criticism of development work, which largely focuses on the difficulties of integrating such concepts into organizational structures and making developments long lasting. In addition, stress, intensification of work and increased pressure are also mentioned as possible harmful outcomes (Eklund, 2000).

1.2 Malaysia Scenario

Most of the companies in Malaysia are facing the same problems such as limited skilled manpower in various departments especially in technical and support to cope with the multi-dimensional problems of management. This will definitely lead to inadequate manpower, absenteeism, stress and unmotivated workers which subsequently will affect the performance of the company. At the same time, it is a two way communication between the workers and the management level to work together to create an inclusive working condition.

In Malaysia, according to Heng and Rampal (2004), there is a severe lack of studies on the occupational health and safety of semiconductor workers even though semiconductor industry plays important role in the nation's economy. Hence for an industry which contribute less to the nation such as small and medium industry definitely a very few studies related to stress have been carried out. In 2001, a guideline on, 'Guidance on the Prevention of Stress and Violence at Work' has been prepared as a result of a collaborative effort of the Department of Occupational Safety and Health, Malaysia, ILO - Safework and the United Nation Development Programme and was launched in Kuala Lumpur. This Guideline was designed to offer an integrated workplace response to the problems of violence and stress that often manifest themselves together at the workplace. It also introduced an innovative

approach whereby workers' health, safety and well-being become integral parts of the economic sustainability and organizational development of enterprises.

Workers especially those in technical and support division are under instruction and supervision of the supervisor where their opinion and outcries are hardly heard by the management. This study hopefully will benefit both parties; workers and management not only to fulfill the organization's mission but also to the advantages in terms of health and safety of the workers, adequate training and salary payment and other perks to these hard working workers.

The problems related to stress and violence at work are slowly but surely emerging as a new challenge requiring the attention and resources of employers and managers. Taken together stress and violence could be responsible for a great number of occupational accidents and diseases leading to death, illness and incapacity.

1.3 Objective of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective of this Study:

To determine the cause and effect of occupational stress among workers in selected SMI companies and their coping strategies to improve health and safety at workplace

1.3.2 Specific Objectives of this Study:

1. To identify the main cause of stress among the workers in selected SMI companies.
2. To investigate about health and safety awareness among the workers in selected SMI companies.

3. To determine coping strategies that are used by the companies to improve health and safety at workplace.
4. To determine the correlation between causes of stress and coping strategies.

1.4 Research Hypothesis

1. Job stress score for stress worker is higher than non stress worker.
2. The score of family and marital factors for stress worker is higher than non stress worker.
3. There is correlation between stress and coping strategies to reduce stress at the workplace.

1.5 Problem Framework

Stress in the workplace has become epidemic and universal concern to the management. In Malaysia even though it is not commonly discussed among the staff and management, the impact can be enormous and vicious that might affect the productivity and the organizational effectiveness. This study examines the source of stress among the workers and how they cope with it in their life routines. Hence, it will help the management and the employees to cooperate and overcome stress related issues that eventually affect the profit margin of the organization. Problem framework for this study can be divided into few factors such as socio demographic factors, family and marital factors and job stress factors. This study also tried to establish coping strategies used by the individual to overcome their stress (Figure 1.1).

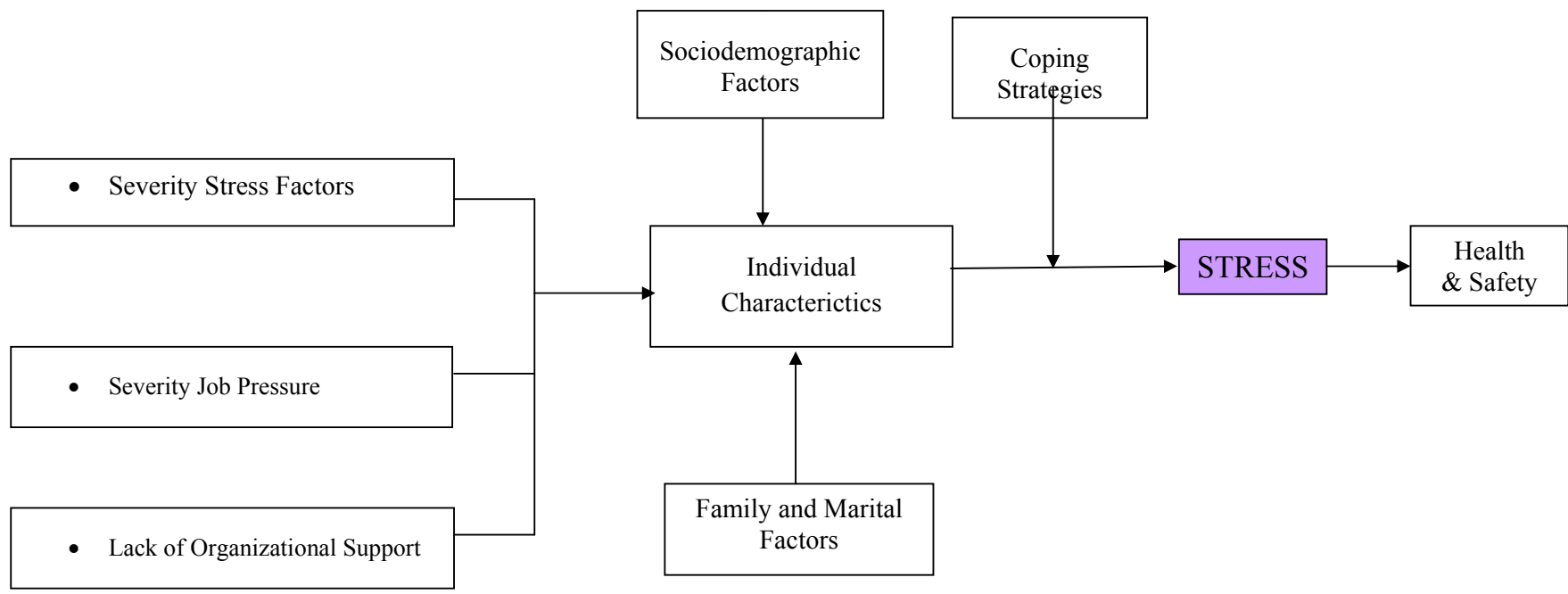


Figure 1.1 : Problem Framework For Stress Among Workers In Selected SMI Companies And Coping Strategies To Improve Health And Safety At Workplace