CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0   Introduction

The Malaysian Armed Forces is the backbone of security for Malaysia, providing protection from any external threat by air, sea or land. In the Malaysian Armed Forces the structure includes two types of military personnel; the officers and other ranks. The officers were commissioned by the *Seri Paduka Baginda Yang DiPertuan Agong*. They were commissioned into the trades from several schemes, namely, cadet officers, graduate officers, cadets who graduated from the Malaysian Defence University and also professional duty officers. The other ranks are not commissioned. The rank of Corporal (or equivalent) is known as a Non Commissioned Officer (NCO) and the ranks of Sergeant and above (or equivalent), are known as Senior Non Commissioned Officers (SNCO). To keep the morale of personnel in good shape, they must be aware of any contributing factors that affect morale. One factor that is obviously synonymous with morale is job stress.

According to Selye (1956), stress can be divided into positive stress and negative stress. The positive stress or *eustress* is a moderate stress that can stimulate and increase the body's activities and the mind, to give relaxation and pleasure. In contrast, negative stress may become harmful to both the physical and mental state if not controlled immediately and may result in chronic illnesses including heart problems and various types of cancer (Cooper et al., 1996).

1.1   Statement of Problem

Basically, in the military there are three levels of management, ranging from the roles and responsibilities of the Chief of the Malaysian Armed Forces to those of the Second Lieutenant. The levels of staff are division, brigade and units or bases; each level of management has different kinds of challenges and stresses in relation to work.

The Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) (subsequently referred to as the "Military") is given a budget allocation every year. This budget is apportioned to each service i.e. Malaysian Army (MA), Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) and Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) to manage their respective operational expenses (OE) and development expenses (DE). The number of assets in the military increases from year to year, and need to be maintained until they are phased out. When the percentage of additional allocation does not match the increasing maintenance cost, the military officer involved faces high stress in managing the limited resources.

Limited time to finish a job as stipulated in the terms of reference is not a new issue. Sometimes, the duties are not in the terms of reference or are different from the rank structure and trade. Having a target date for each task puts pressure on the officers and if the amount of work increases it will cause job stress. In addition, for military officers who are on staff duty, attending meetings nearly every day becomes a normal duty.

The sources of stress are not limited to the office and official duty only, but also the environment outside the workplace. Traffic jams in big cities in Malaysia is quite normal. Every movement, especially in Kuala Lumpur needs to be planned to avoid traffic jams, which could contribute to stress.

In the military, there are many instances where family needs are sacrificed, for example, when working in the field or working for short periods at the training or field area it is not possible for military personnel to stay with family. In the case of navy officers, they are stationed on a rotation basis for three months at Station Lima, the island in the Spratly area, which is situated between Peninsular Malaysia and Borneo. The island has no facilities for accommodating families, even rations are re-supplied by air. Thinking about the family and household responsibilities may lead to stress.

Military officers who are selected to serve as part of United Nations Peace Keeping Operations also experience similar phenomena and their stress is exacerbated if the operations extend for more than a year. Also the situation experienced in the area of operation, which may be a war torn area where the military personnel are exposed to crossfire or fighting among opposing groups, will significantly increase job stress.

For those who have more than one appointment or more than one superior, each of whom has different values, perception and character and where there is a need to understand each other's personal characteristics and failings the officer's life can become quite miserable. Being a subordinate to bosses who

are very self-centred and have a philosophy that the boss is always right is quite common in military life. These people are often very negative and expect all their instructions to be obeyed without further verification.

In the military, just as in other organizations, there are various trades (the details of the various trades are shown in Appendix C), which need different types of skill and the different nature of duties and responsibilities also present different challenges. Many of the skills required are not interchangeable; military personnel cannot simply be replaced with another tradesman. In other words, the personnel are not multi skilled.

Having limited resources, while needing to support so many missions and working in hazardous areas on UN missions away from the family increases the stress level of military officers.

Based on the above scenario, this study believes that job stress in the military context is unique and cannot be compared to other jobs. Thus, it can be seen that factors contributing to job stress among military officers are very different from those faced by civilians.

1.2   Research Questions

Since, the main purpose of the research is to determined whether there is a relationship between job stress to the job satisfaction, therefore the questions will be frame in the following manner:

- What are the factors lead to job stress among the military officers?

- What are the most severe factors that affecting the job stress among military officers?

- Are the demographic variables contribute the the job stress?

- Does the job stress affect the job satisfaction of military officers?

1.3   Significance of the Study

This study will contribute to the knowledge on job stress and job satisfaction in the context of military officers. The findings of the study could assist the MAF in formulating policies that will help improve the job performance of military officers in the execution of their duties.

Military organizations have different levels of management and different types of duties and responsibilities. The level of management in the MAF can be illustrated by rank and the type of duties and responsibilities can be divided into various types of trade as well as appointment. Besides those categories, there are other levels of management known as level of command function. The level of command can be divided into Service Headquarters i.e. Malaysian Army Headquarters, Royal Malaysian Navy Headquarters and Royal Malaysian Air Force Headquarters (basically responsible for policy and procedure including the inspectorate department). The organizational set-up between services is different because the roles, duties and responsibilities for each service are different.

At the same time, this study may provide the administrators and policy makers with valuable information about the existing level of job stress as well as job satisfaction so that they are fit to perform their duties and responsibilities efficiently and effectively. The results of the study may be used to enhance their training syllabus on how to manage stress and have a healthy life style. All the findings and recommendations are based on real data and may be useful to the Human Resources Department (HRD) as a platform for improving the performance appraisal system, assisting them in decision making, discussing, debating and the realignment of HRD management policies.

1.4   Concept Definition

1.4.1 Job Stress is defined as the discrepancy between environmental and situational factors in their work and the employee's capability and resources to handle them (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Edworthy, 2000). Performance refers to either employees' discrete activities and behaviours or their aggregated value to their organization (Motowidlo et al., 1997; Kocak, 2006).

Stress can also be defined as the excess of demand over the individual's ability to meet it (Atkinson, 1988) and is experienced when people have too much to do and not enough time. The solution is for people to have less to do or have help to do it. Manifestations of stress include: sense of panic, breathing seems more rapid and shallow, too tired and apathetic to do anything else, collapse in front of the television, cannot wait to have a drink after getting home from work

and snapping at the family. Cigarette clenched between the teeth, skin pallid and muscles flabby, he thrusts his way, elbows out, up the next rung of the ladder. Stress comes from all sides and affects people in a different ways. People have to learn to deal with it, eliminating it where possible and desirable, in other cases coping with it as best as they can and, on occasion, using it in a positive way (Atkinson, 1988). According to Atkinson, stress has been called "the disease of the twentieth century", and it is believed to cause more illness than anything else known to modern medicine. "For most of us stress has become a habit we just can't seem to kick" Goliszek, (1993). It is very important to highlight this information as it will help those who need to identify personnel suffering from stress and if the symptoms of stress are recognized then the stress can be treated at an early stage.

Another definition given by Selve (1976) for job stress is the non-specific response of the body to any demands made upon it. It is considered to be an internal state or reaction to anything a person consciously or unconsciously perceives as a threat, either real or imagined (Clarke and Watson, 1991. Robbins, (2001) defines stress as a dynamic condition in which the individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important. Stress can be caused by environmental, organizational and individual variables (Matteson and Ivancevich, 1999; Cook and Hunsaker, 2001).

1.4.2 Job Satisfaction

From Research done by June (2009), job satisfaction has also been defined as the sum of job facet satisfaction across all facets of a job (Wanous and Lawler, 1972), while Porter and Lawler, (1968) have operationalized satisfaction as a discrepancy and defined it as the extent to which rewards actually received meet or exceed the perceived equitable level of rewards. The greater the failure of actual rewards to meet or exceed perceived equitable rewards, the more dissatisfied a person is. A simple definition of job satisfaction is that of Smith et al. (1969) who defined it as the feelings a worker has about their job.

While job satisfaction concerns a person's feelings towards their job, performance refers to a person's accomplishment of tasks that comprise their job and is the end result of the application of effort (Porter and Lawler, 1968). Porter and Lawler have identified three types of performance measures: objective and verifiable indices, ratings of individuals by someone other than the person whose performance is being evaluated, and self-ratings. Although the last method is purely subjective and difficult to validate, Porter and Lawler believe it could still serve as a useful measure for the researcher interested in relationships between performance and other variables. In the present study the performance variable was measured using self-ratings.

1.4.3 Work Performance. Work performance may be defined as one's ability to do a group of tasks that must be performed for an organization to achieve its goals. It may be enhanced by an emphasis on strengths and an understanding of what changes are needed. People are anxious to do their job well, as our self-esteem is largely based on the position we hold and the effective use of skills is a fundamental source of human satisfaction. Performance is one of the words that is most often mentioned and discussed among the management of many organizations. It is synonymous with almost any organization that is particular and committed to improving its products or services. This might include the performance of machinery, equipment, apparatus and tools, performance of finance and many others. For measuring or evaluating the performances mentioned above it is relatively easy as their performance is qualified by facts and figures, but when dealing with measuring, evaluating or assessing employee performance, it is very subjective.

1.5   Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is to compare and inspect whether there is any relationship between job stress and job satisfaction among military officers in Malaysia. The specific objectives of the research are:

- To identify factors that lead to job stress among military officers.

- To evaluate the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction of officers in all services in the MAF.

- To identify the most severe factors that affecting the job stress among military officers

- To evaluate demographic variables contribute the the job stress.

- To provide suggestions to the management on how to handle job stress.

- To suggest protective factors that can prevent or reduce the effect of work stress among military officers.

1.6   Limitations of the Study

There are two major limitations faced in conducting this research that need to be noted. First this study focused on military officers; stress being faced by the other ranks may have differed variables. Officers in different services such as the Royal Malaysian Police and other security agencies are totally different in the nature of their duty and therefore this study cannot be generalized to the officers in the Malaysian Uniformed Forces as a whole. Thus, the validity of the findings is limited to the Malaysian context only. Future research may be conducted to compare the predictive validity of the model across the Malaysian uniformed forces. Second, given that there may be other individual, occupational, organizational, and non-work factors that also affect and moderate stress and job satisfaction, researchers interested in this area should explore these factors in future.

1.7   Organization of the Study

This study consists of five chapters as follows:

Chapter 1 – Introduction, this chapter expounds briefly on the background of the study and includes Statement of Problem, Objective of Study, Significance of Study, Scope of Study, Limitations of Study and Organization of Study.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review, this chapter includes some of the available literature on job stress and job satisfaction. The literature covers both military and non-military articles related to the subject matter.

Chapter 3 – Research Methodology, this chapter explains the research methodology used in this study, which involved data collection, sampling technique, design of study and analytical technique.

Chapter 4 – Research Result reports the research findings including statistical summary, measurement analysis, testing of hypotheses and results of study.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion and Recommendations conclude the study and suggests recommendations to improve job satisfaction and techniques to reduce the job stress of military officers.

1.8   Conclusion

The research background discussed in this chapter includes the Statement of Problem, Research Questions, Objectives of Study, Significance of Study, Scope of Study, Limitations of Study and Organization of Study and research concerns. It is understood that there is great concern among military personnel concerning job stress in their career. It is more stressful due to the uncontrollable reasons arising from the nature of the job.

The next chapter briefly presents the literature relating to the research that is available through the secondary data i.e. cited on the Internet, or in journals and books written by local and foreign researchers.