CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This study attempted to identify the stress levels and ten major work stressors of secondary school administrators in Petaling Jaya. Comparisons were made to see whether there were any differences between or among the following groups in terms of the level of stress:

1) Principals and Assistant Administrators.
2) Administrators with less than 90 staff and more than 90 staff to control.
3) Administrators with a student enrolment of less than one thousand, one thousand to two thousand and more than two thousand to oversee.
4) Administrators with less than seven years, seven to eleven years and more than eleven years of administrative experience.

3.1 The Subjects of the Study

The subjects of the study comprised of 27 principals and 23 assistant administrators of secondary schools in Petaling Jaya. The assistant administrators included ten Penolong Kanan I (Assistant Principal in charge of Teacher Affairs and Curriculum), seven Penolong

Kanan II (Assistant Principal in charge of student affairs) and six Penyelia Petang (Afternoon Supervisors).

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of Respondents by Age (N = 50)

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Below fifty	27	54.0
Fifty and above	23	46.0

Table 1 shows that 54% of the secondary school administrators in Petaling Jaya were below fifty years of age. The rest were fifty years and above.

Table 2: Frequency and Percentage of Respondents by Gender (N = 50)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	13	26.0
Female	37	64.0

Table 2 shows that the number of female secondary school administrators in Petaling Jaya was 64%, while the number of male administrators was 26%.

Table 3: Frequency and Percentage of Respondents by Years of Administrative Experience (N = 50)

Years of Administrative Experience	Frequency	Percentage
One to six years	18	36.0
Seven to eleven years	20	40.0
More than eleven years	12	24.0

Table 3 indicates that the majority of secondary school administrators in Petaling Jaya, that is 76%, had less than twelve years of administrative experience. Only 24% had twelve or more years of administrative experience.

Table 4: Frequency and Percentage of Respondents by their Student Enrolment (N= 50)

Size of Student Enrolment	Frequency	Percentage
Less than a thousand	8	16.0
Between one thousand and two thousand	17	34.0
More than two thousand	25	50.0

Table 4 shows that 50% of the respondents have large student population, that is more than 2,000 students, to oversee.

Table 5: Frequency and Percentage of Respondents by Staff Size Under their Control (N= 50)

Staff Size	Frequency	Percentage
Less than ninety	18	36.0
Ninety and more	32	64.0

Table 5 indicates that the majority, that is 64%, of secondary school administrators in Petaling Jaya has large staff numbers to control.

3.2 The Instrument of the Study

The study employed a questionnaire as its instrument (see Appendix 1). The questionnaire comprised of two sections :-

1) **Section A** - The respondent's particulars which included age, gender, administrative experience, size of student enrolment, staff size, level of administrative position and finally self-reported stress level.

2) **Section B** - The Administrative Stress Index (ASI) was used initially by Koch, Gmelch and Tung (1982) in their study. The Administrative Stress Index (ASI) contained 35 items. These items were work related situations that school administrators had identified as being sources of concern, also known as stressors. The 35 stressors were clustered into 4 dimensions of stress namely Role-Based Stress (RBS), Task-Based Stress, Conflict-Mediating Stress (CMS) and Boundary-Spanning Stress (BSS). The following tables describe the items pertaining to each dimension.

Table 6: Stressor (ASI items) and Stress Dimensions

(a) Role Based Stress (13 items)

No	ASI Item No	Stressor (ASI items)
1	3	Feeling staff don't understand goals and expectations.
2	4	Feeling not fully qualified to handle job.
3	6	Not being able to satisfy conflicting demands of those who have authority over me.
4	8	Feeling supervisors don't expect enough of me.
5	10	Imposing high expectations on one self.
6	11	Feeling pressure for better job performance.
7	16	Not knowing supervisor's evaluation of one's performance.

8	19	Feeling too much responsibility delegated by superior.
9	22	Feeling too little authority to carry out responsibilities.
10	26	Too heavy a workload to finish during normal work day.
11	28	Feeling progress on job is not enough.
12	30	Unclear on job scope and responsibilities.
13	34	Influencing superiors actions and decisions that affect me.

(b) Task Based Stress (13 items)

No	ASI Item No	Stressor (ASI items)
1	1	Frequent interruption by phone calls.
2	2	Supervising and coordinating many people.
3	5	Lack of relevant information to carry out job.
4	9	Frequent interruption from staff.
5	12	Writing memos, letters and other communication.
6	14	Speaking in front of groups.
7	17	Making decisions that effect the lives of colleagues, staff and students.
8	18	Sacrificing personal time (after working hours)for school activities.
9	21	Preparing and allocating budget resources.
10	25	Too little authority to carry out responsibilities.
11	29	Administering the negotiated contract.
12	31	Unclear on job scope and responsibilities.
13	32	Completing reports/paper work on time.

(c) Conflict Mediating Stress (5 items)

No	ASI Item No	Stressor (ASI items)
1	7	Resolving student conflict.
2	13	Resolving differences with superiors.
3	20	Resolving parent/school conflict.
4	23	Handling student discipline problems.
5	33	Resolving staff differences.

(d) Boundary Spanning (4 items)

No	ASI Item No	Stressor (ASI items)
1	15	Meeting social expectations.
2	24	Being involved in the collective bargaining process.
3	27	Complying with state, federal and organizational rules and policies
4	35	Gaining public approval/funds for school programs.

Respondents indicated from a Likert-type scale of one to five, how each item afffected them at their work place, by circling the appropriate number. This is pictured below :

NOT APPLICABLE	RARELY/NEVER BOTHERS ME		OCCASSIONALLY BOTHERS ME		FREQUENTLY BOTHERS ME
NA	1	2	3	4	5

1. Being interupted frequently by telephone calls NA 1 2 3 4 5
2. Supervising and coordinating the task of many people. NA 1 2 3 4 5

The stress levels were measured in two ways :

1) self-reported stress – respondents indicated whether they found their work : not stressful at all, mildly stressful, stressful or extremely stressful.
2) stress levels as measured by the ASI – respondents indicated whether the 35 items in the ASI, which represented 35 situations at work : rarely/never bothered; occasionally bothered; or frequently bothered them on a scale of one to five. By combining scores : 1 to indicate mild stress; 2 to indicate moderate stress; 3 to indicate high stress; and 4 and 5 to indicate extreme stress; the percentage of respondents experiencing each level of stress was determined.

The work stressors were limited to the duties and activities of administrators in relation to the entire school system and its sub-systems, as identified by the 35 items of the instrument used, the Administrative Stress Index or ASI (Koch, Gmelch and Tung, 1982). By determining the mean score of each stressor, the ten stressors that caused the highest stress for secondary school administrators in Petaling Jaya could be determined.

3.3 Data Collection

The study employed the survey method of which the instrument – a questionnaire was used to obtain the required data. The subjects of the study were first contacted by post. The researcher indicated in a cover letter what the study was about, how the questionnaire was to be answered and the date by which it had to be returned. A stamped envelope addressed to the researcher was also included. After four weeks (the appointed time indicated was three weeks), the researcher had not received a single reply. The reason for this, probably in large part, was due to the fact that it was the end of the school year, and therefore a busy time for school administrators.

The researcher then approached her school principal, who as it turned out, was the chairperson of the Petaling Jaya Secondary School Principals Panel. The Principal in question very graciously agreed to distribute the questionnaires (attached with stamped envelope addressed

to the researcher) to the panel comprising 40 principals of all public secondary schools in Petaling Jaya. This time around, the researcher received 27 completed questionnaires after two weeks. Questionnaires were also personally given to as many assistant administrators as was possible at their place of work. The respondents were given one week to complete the questionnaires and the questionnaires were collected personally.

3.4 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages were used for the major part of data analysis this study. A frequency table with frequency counts and percentages was used to display the level of stress experienced by the administrators. The reported stress levels for all the individuals (ie items of the ASI) stressors are also shown by simple frequency tables. The first ten stressors were also ranked according to the intensity of their occurrence, determined by their mean value. Lastly, the differences in terms of the level of stress for the various groups were tested using the t-tests or one way analysis of variance to see whether there was any significant difference between or among the groups. For that, the data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 6.