

The Influence of Personality Type on Organizational Stress and Turnover Intention

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TABLE OF CONTENT

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	i
TABLE OF CONTENT	ii
LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
ABSTRACT	viii
ABSTRAK (MALAY)	ix
1.0 INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Background of Study	1
1.2 Problem Statement	5
1.3 Research Objectives	6
1.4 Research Questions	6
1.5 Significance of the Study	7
1.6 Term and Definitions	8
1.6.1 Organization Stress	8
1.6.2 Turnover Intention	11
1.6.3 Personality	11
1.6.4 The Big Five Personality Dimensions	12
1.7 Organization of the Chapters	13
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW	

2.1	Introduction	15
2.2	Stress Management	15
2.3	Organizational Stress	18
2.4	The Big Five Personality Dimensions	25
2.5	Turnover Intention	28
2.6	Theoretical Framework	33
2.7	Hypotheses	34
3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY		
3.1	Introduction	36
3.2	Research Design	36
3.3	Population and Sample	36
3.4	Data Collection	37
3.5	Measurements of Variables	
3.5.1	Control Variables	38
3.5.2	Independent Variables	38
3.5.3	Dependent Variable	41
3.5.4	Moderating Variable	42
3.6	Questionnaire Design	44
3.7	Survey Administration	47
3.8	Statistical Analysis	48
3.8.1	Descriptive Statistics	48
3.8.2	Factor Analysis	49
3.8.3	Reliability Analysis	50
3.8.4	Correlation Analysis	50

3.8.5 Multiple Regression Analysis	51
3.9 Summary of the Chapter	52
4.0 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS	
4.1 Introduction	53
4.2 Response Rate	53
4.3 Data Editing	54
4.3.1 Handling Blank Responses	54
4.3.2 Coding	54
4.3.3 Categorizing	55
4.4 Profile of Respondents	56
4.5 Goodness of Measures	59
4.5.1 Factor Analysis	60
4.5.2 Reliability Analysis	63
4.5.3 Revised Framework and Hypotheses	65
4.6 Descriptive Analysis	67
4.7 Correlation Analysis	68
4.8 Hypotheses Testing through Regression Analysis	71
4.8.1 Multiple Regression Analysis for Independent Variables	71
4.8.2 Multiple Regression Analysis for Moderating Variables	74
4.9 Summary of the Chapter	76
5.0 DISSCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION	
5.1 Introduction	77
5.2 Recapitulation of Findings	77

5.3	Discussion of findings	79
5.3.1	Organizational Stress and Turnover Intention	79
5.3.2	Moderating Effect of Personality	80
5.4	Implications of the Study	81
5.5	Limitations of the Study	82
5.6	Suggestions for Future Research	83
5.7	Conclusion	85
	REFERENCES	87
	APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE AND COVER LETTER	95
	APPENDIX B: PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS	102
	APPENDIX C: FACTOR ANALYSIS	105
	APPENDIX D: RELIABILITY ANALYSIS	121
	APPENDIX E: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS	133
	APPENDIX F: CORRELATION ANALYSIS	134
	APPENDIX G: MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS	137
	APPENDIX H: MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS WITH MODERATOR	143

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 2.1: ASSET Factor Structure	22
Table 3.1: Summary of Questionnaires Items Adapted in the Study	44
Table 4.1: Response Rate of the Survey	54
Table 4.2: Coding of Demographic Variables	55
Table 4.3: Profile of Respondents	58
Table 4.4: Rotated Factor Loadings for Independent Variables	60
Table 4.5: Reliability Coefficients for the Major Variables	65
Table 4.6: Restated Hypotheses	66
Table 4.7: Descriptive Statistics of Variables	68
Table 4.8: Pearson Correlation Coefficients	70
Table 4.9: Multiple Regression Analysis	72
Table 4.10: Summary of Results of Hypotheses Testing for H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5	73
Table 4.11: Summary of Results of Hypotheses Testing for H6, H7, H8, H9, and H10	76

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1.1: The Employment in Malaysia	2
Figure 1.2: 2010 Voluntary Turnover Rate in Malaysia	3
Figure 2.1: The Cooper-Cummings Framework	25
Figure 2.2: Theoretical Framework	34
Figure 4.1: Revised Theoretical Framework	66

ABSTRACT

Most of the previous researchers have identified the factors of organizational stress which apparently are common factors all around the world. Stressors such as factors intrinsic to the job, role in the organizations, relationship at work, career development, organizational structure and climate, and home and work interface (Cartwright & Cooper, 1997; Cooper & Marshall, (1978). The degree of stress experienced by people is different even though they are under the same work conditions. Some people work best under pressure while some found it difficult to cope. The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of organizational stress on turnover intention and to find out whether personality type contributes to the situation. In particular, how different personality behave under the same stress level and their reaction towards turnover intention. The Big Five personality dimensions was used in this study to measure the personality among employees. Sample size was employees working in Electronic and Electrical industry in Penang. Results showed that organizational stress is positively related to turnover intention. Having high responsibility for other people, lack of job security, and high workload all contributed to organizational stress. Individual with high conscientiousness, openness to experience, and extraversion are less likely to suffer from organizational stress and turnover intention.

Keywords: Organizational stress, personality, turnover intention, Big Five personality dimensions.

ABSTRAK

Kebanyakan penyelidik terdahulu telah mengenal pasti faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan tekanan organisasi yang merupakan fenomena biasa di seluruh dunia. Tekanan itu sebagai faktor intrinsik kepada peranan kerja, dalam organisasi, hubungan di tempat kerja, pembangunan kerjaya, struktur organisasi dan iklim, dan peralihan antara rumah dan kerja (Cartwright & Cooper, 1997; Cooper & Marshall, (1978). Tahap tekanan yang dialami oleh seseorang individu adalah berbeza walaupun mereka adalah di bawah situasi kerja yang sama. Sesetengah orang bekerja secara efektif di bawah tekanan sementara beberapa mendapati sukar untuk mengatasinya. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji kesan tekanan organisasi kepada niat untuk berhenti dan untuk mengetahui sama ada jenis personaliti menyumbang kepada situasi tersebut, bagaimana personaliti yang berbeza member kesan yang berbeza kepada individu di bawah tahap tekanan yang sama dan reaksi mereka terhadap niat untuk berhenti. Lima dimensi personaliti telah digunakan dalam kajian ini untuk mengukur personaliti di kalangan pekerja. Sampel saiz adalah pekerja dalam Elektronik dan industri Elektrik di Pulau Pinang. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa tekanan organisasi positif yang berkaitan dengan niat perolehan. Setelah tanggungjawab yang tinggi untuk orang lain, kekurangan keselamatan pekerjaan, dan beban kerja yang tinggi menyumbang kepada tekanan organisasi. Individu dengan sifat berhati-hati tinggi, keterbukaan untuk mengalami, dan extraversi kurang cenderung untuk mengalami tekanan organisasi dan niat untuk berhenti.

Chapter 1

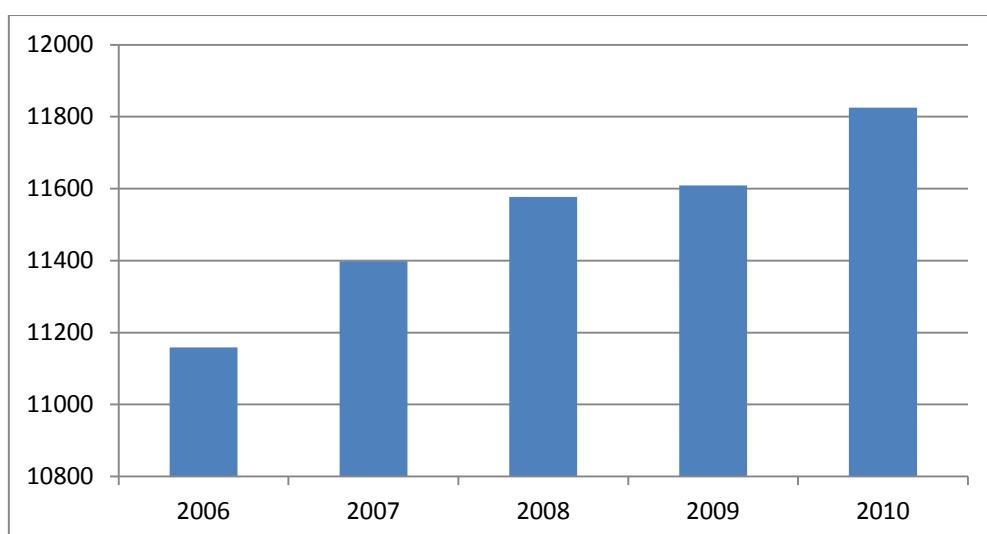
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

In our daily battle of surviving in this highly competitive world, we all need jobs. Jobs provide us with security and a necessity of life. With constant changes and drastic shift of trends in globalization, employees are highly susceptible to the impact of organizational stress. Job satisfaction is no longer the top priority, at the extent of job security, pay and rewards; employees are tolerating the excessive demand of their job. Many tolerate the high demand of workload, pressure from higher management or even meeting up with impossible datelines; or are they barely coping? Some individuals work best when they receive a little push of pressure in their work, while some stumble at defeat to the intense pressure. However which way the unique patterns of nature works, there is no denying that organizational stress could lead to many negative effects such as turnover. Many individuals have taken the “easy way out” to deal with the predicament, by quitting. But the fact of the matter is, organizational stress exists in almost every job and there is no escaping the blow.

Employee is the biggest asset and resource of a company. Therefore hiring, training and retaining employees have now become the main focus. Skills and knowledge that these individuals acquire and develop over time becomes too valuable for the company. Along with the intense competition and rapid globalization, Malaysia too (along with other countries in the world) is currently facing acute shortage of skilled workforce. With limited resources, these employees are burdened

with excessive workload that leads to organizational stress and eventually relates to absenteeism, turnover, poor performance and illness. Organizational stress in Malaysia is more than often taken lightly by individuals and organizations. The impact of it is extremely damaging either to individuals, organizations, or even the country itself. Stress is a very costly predicament, in United Kingdom stress caused extra financial burden with 9.8 million work-day loss in 2009 to 2010 which was due to organizational stress and Australia suffered \$14.8 billions loss of productivity which related to stress (Ismail, 2011). Malaysia too does not escape the effect of organizational stress, although there were very few reports on the issues. Malaysian employment rate has increases over the years as shown in Figure 1.1 below. More and more Malaysians are being susceptible to the attack of organizational stress that causes many problems. The more reason that this issue should be given the spotlight that it needs. In our culture we have to work in order to live and other supports. And most Malaysians spent more time at work than anything else, and sometimes even after working hours has ended they still have to think about work or bring work home.



*Source: Bank Negara.

Figure 1.1, The Employment in Malaysia.

According to AON Hewitt (2010), based on a study conducted on organizations in Malaysia, the average overall turnover rate which include voluntary and involuntary is 15.7 percent in 2010. Where voluntary turnover alone is inhibits 13 percent, which marked an increase compared to previously 10.1 percent in 2009 and 9.3 percent in 2008. Furthermore, according to the AON Hewitt (2010) the group of employee with the highest turnover rate is among the Junior Manager/ Supervisor/ Professional as shown in the Figure 1.2 below. And it was reported that engineering is the function with the highest attrition rate of 31 percent among finance, sales, production, and general management (AON Hewitt, 2010).

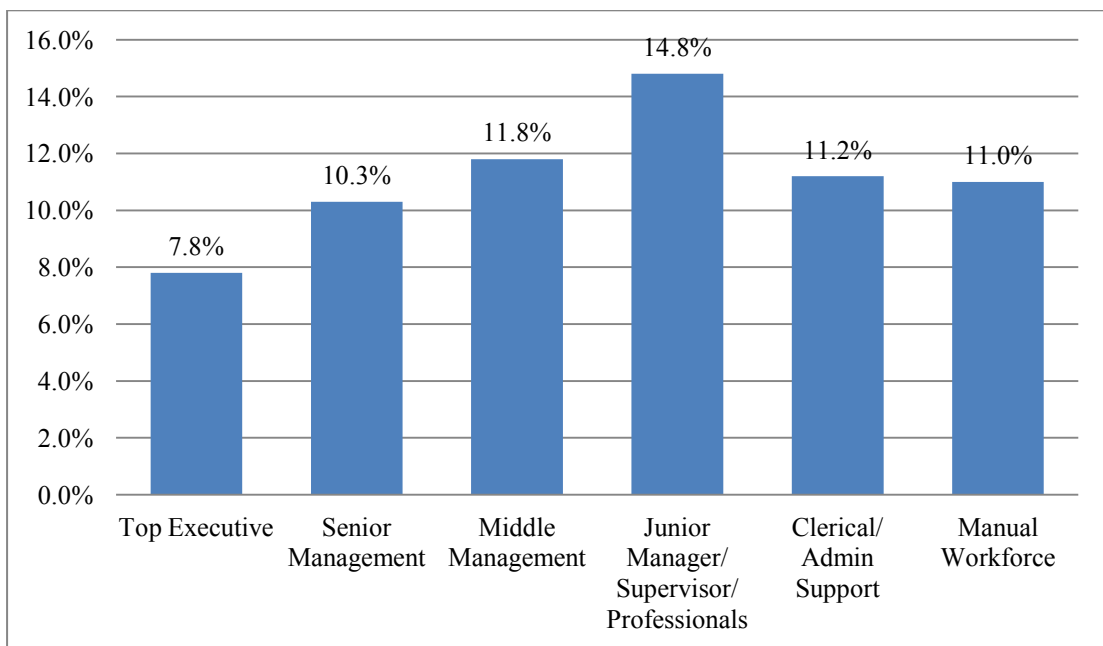


Figure 1.2, 2010 Voluntary Turnover Rate in Malaysia

The main focus of this research is the electrical and electronics (E&E) industry in Malaysia. According to Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA), the electrical and electronics industry is the leading sector in Malaysia's manufacturing sector. Its significant contribution to the country's manufacturing

output is 31 percent, exports is 48.7 percent and 33.7 percent towards employment, making it one of the prominent key driver industry in Malaysia. Referring to the report by MIDA in 2010, the gross output of the industry totalled RM166.2 billion, exports amounted to RM 249.8 billion and have provided employment opportunities for 336,408 people. Countries like USA, China and Singapore are the major export destinations while Taiwan, USA and South Korea are the major import destinations of E&E industry.

Over the years, E&E industry in Malaysia have developed significantly and continue to produce higher value-added products of a wide range of semiconductor devices including photovoltaic cells and modules, high-end consumer electronics, and information and communication technology (ICT) products. It has also developed capabilities and skills among its employees and intensifies its effort in research and development while outsourcing the non-core activities domestically. According to MIDA the E&E industry in Malaysia can be categorized into four sub-sectors; consumer electronics, electronic components, industrial electronics, and electrical. According to a report by Invest Penang, currently there are more than 700 companies operating in the industrial parks in Penang. Out of this figure, about 200 companies belong to the electrical and electronics industry. Dominant companies in Penang in the field of semiconductors are Intel, AMD and Fairchild who are world leaders have been in Penang for 35 years. Lead players in the wireless communications are Motorola and Agilent, in LED area are Osram, Lumileds and Avago; and in storage area are Seagate and Western Digital.

1.2 Problem Statement

We are living in a rapidly globalising world where the result is an intensified competition. Assessing Malaysia's competitiveness is vital in an environment that is constantly changing. Quoting from a speech by YB Datuk Seri Dr Fong Chan Onn (2007), Minister of Human Resource, Malaysia is ranked 23 out of 61 countries in the World Competitive Yearbook 2006 by the International Management Development, an improvement compared to rank 28 the previous year. With growing concern of the intensified competition and globalisation, Malaysia should not be left behind just because of the workforce issues and how to retain their employees. Therefore, I believe that it is extremely crucial for organizations in Malaysia to tackle the issues regarding organizational stress problems and to focus on the bigger picture. Employees are constantly exposed to workload, time pressure, work relationships problems, and other work related issues that causes burnout, depression health issues and turnover. It is not an issue that can be taken lightly, gone were the days where you work from nine-till-five; employee are expected to get their job done at whatever cost necessary even when it means working late at night or bringing home the work. This behaviour is affecting their quality of life and well-being. That is why there is an alarming need to carry out this research in order to understand in depth the matters and to provide solution for the companies. Organizational stress among employees is an area often thought of as unimportant by organization but the impact is rather significant. Employee quit their job because they could not cope with the stress and the constant pressure (Layne *et. al.*, 2004; Sullivan & Bhagat, 1992; Williams, 2003).

Most of the previous researchers have identified the factors of organizational stress which apparently are common factors all around the world. Stressors such as factors intrinsic to the job, role in the organizations, relationship at work, career development, organizational structure and climate, and home and work interface (Cartwright & Cooper, 1997; Cooper & Marshall, (1978). The degree of stress experienced by people is different even though they are under the same work conditions. Some people work best under pressure while some found it difficult to cope. The personality of a person could contribute to the relationship of stress and turnover, which is the main interest of this paper.

1.3 Research Objectives

The research objectives for this study are:

- i. To find out the causes of organizational stress on employees.
- ii. To find out the relationship between organizational stress and turnover intention among employees.
- iii. To explore the extent of which personality influences organizational stress and turnover intention.
- iv. To suggest suitable solutions for the phenomenon.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

- i. What are the causes of organizational stress on employees?

- ii. What are the relationships between organizational stress and turnover intention among employees?
- iii. To what extent does the personality influences organizational stress and turnover intention?
- iv. What are the recommendations or solutions to help employees to understand their stress level and how they can manage it?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The unique contribution of this research is that:

- i. It can help companies to identify the level of stress among their employees and the influence towards turnover intention. Apart from that, they can also learn and benefit from this research on what works and what fails within the organizations and to be able to design and structure their jobs in order to prevent organizational stress, to develop new approaches towards employee retention and improvement in management skills. In other words, Human Resource Management could utilize this information to address the current situations in order to take appropriate actions. Organizations or managers could observe and learn employees' personality and how the different personality react on certain occasions and could benefit this observation through a more thoughtful and suitable job design that could bring out the optimum output. And my biggest expectation of all is to come out with a solution to assist these companies to sustain their businesses in this highly competitive era.

- ii. To expand the research area and hopefully to open doors to new researches in future for Graduate School of Business (GSB) and to give the school something meaningful in terms of result discovery in the area of business management especially organizational behaviour by which this study could serve as example of a real case in the working environment.. And finally to contribute to the GSB archive, as well as to comply with the research aspects of sustainability requirement.
- iii. Unintentionally, it will help the government to monitor these companies, whether their policies are aligned with Malaysian government's policies. And whether they are operating legally in Malaysia.
- iv. Finally, it can benefit me as an MBA student in Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) as this is my final year. I do wish to apply and practise the knowledge that I have obtained along my period of studies in USM. This research would also help me with my self-confidence and develop my skills and competencies in management and leadership.

1.6 Term and Definitions

1.6.1 Organizational Stress

Stress is defined as “the experience of opportunities or threats that people perceive as important and also perceive they might not be able to handle or deal with effectively” (Lazarus, 1991). Moorhead & Griffin (1995) defined stress as “a person’s adaptive response to a stimulus that places excessive psychological or physical demands on that person”. Robbins (1993) based from his study on previous literature state that “stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an

opportunity, constrain or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important”. According to Cartwright & Cooper (1997), “a stress is any force that puts a psychological or physical function beyond its range of stability, producing a strain within the individual”.

1.6.1.1 Workload

Workload refers to the amount of stress experienced by individuals due to the perception that they are unable to cope or be productive with the amount of work allocated to them (Coetzee & Villiers, 2010). According to the Pressure Management Indicator (PMI) developed by Williams & Cooper (1996), workload is defined as the amount or difficulty of work one must deal with.

1.6.1.2 Work-life Balance

Work-life balance is referred to the sources of stress relating to the extent to which the demands of work interfere with people’s personal and home life (ASSET; Robertson Cooper, 2002b). According to the Pressure Management Indicator (PMI) developed by Williams & Cooper (1996), work-life balance is the extent to which a person is able to separate home from work and not let things get to him or her.

1.6.1.3 Job Security

Job security is referred to the sources of stress relating to the level of job security perceived by people (ASSET; Robertson Cooper, 2002b). Job insecurity is an

overall concern of losing one's job or the discontinuation of one's job and it also implies uncertainty about the future (Coetzee & Villiers, 2010).

1.6.1.4 Autonomy

Autonomy or job control refers to the sources of stress relating to the amount of control people have over their work (ASSET; Robertson Cooper, 2002b). Lack of autonomy is defined as the experience of stress which is strongly linked to perceptions of decision-making authority and control (Coetzee & Villiers, 2010).

1.6.1.5 Top Management

Top management refers to the sources of stress coming from to a team or an individual who are at a higher level of organizational management who have the responsibilities of managing a company or corporation and they hold specific authority or power in management.

1.6.1.6 Time Pressure

Time pressure refers to the sources of stress relating to a situation where individual is required to complete a certain task or work under a short amount of time (Dror *et. al.*, 1999).

1.6.1.7 Responsibility for Other People

Responsibility for other people simply means taking responsibility for others' actions and decisions (PMI; Williams & Cooper, 1996).

1.6.2 Turnover Intention

Turnover is the movement of members across the boundary of an organization (Price, 1997). George & Jones (2008) defined turnover as the permanent withdrawal of an employee from the employing organization. While Hausknecht & Trevor (2010) described it as; a collective turnover refers to the aggregate levels of employee departures that occur within groups, work units or organizations.

1.6.3 Personality

Hence, what is personality? In order to understand individual differences and their complex components, there are two determinants involved which are heredity and environment (Nahavandi, 2009). This view is widely used and accepted by researches and scholars and consistent all over the world. Heredity consists of an individual's gender, race, ethnicity, and genetic makeup. While environmental factors include culture, education background, parental upbringing, and physical environment. Consistently, personality can be influenced by nature or nurture; nature being the biological heritage and genetic makeup while nurture is the life experiences of an individual (George & Jones, 2008).

1.6.4 The Big Five Personality Dimensions

1.6.4.1 Extraversion

Extraversion is a degree to which a person is sociable, talkative, assertive, active, and ambitious (Nahavandi, 2009). According to another source, extraversion is the tendency to experience positive emotional states and feel good about oneself and the world around one (George & Jones, 2008).

1.6.4.2 Neuroticism

Neuroticism is the degree to which a person is anxious, depressed, angry, and insecure (Nahavandi, 2009). According to another source, neuroticism is the tendency to experience negative emotional states and view oneself and the world negatively (George & Jones, 2008).

1.6.4.3 Agreeableness

Agreeableness is the degree to which a person is courteous, likable, good-natured, and flexible (Nahavandi, 2009). According to another source, agreeableness is the tendency to get along well with others (George & Jones, 2008).

1.6.4.4 Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness is the degree to which a person is dependable, responsible, organized, and plans ahead (Nahavandi, 2009). According to another source,

conscientiousness is the extent to which a person is careful, scrupulous, and persevering (George & Jones, 2008).

1.6.4.5 Openness to Experience

Openness to experience is the degree to which a person is imaginative, broad-minded, curious, and seeks new experiences (Nahavandi, 2009). According to another source, openness to experience is the extent to which a person is original, has broad interests, and is willing to take risks (George & Jones, 2008).

1.7 Organization of the Chapters

The chapters will be organized as below:

Chapter One is the overall introduction of the study in terms of the purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, and significant of the study. It also briefly introduced the background of the topic as well as some definitions for the terms which will be used throughout the whole thesis.

Chapter Two consist of literature review which explores the previous researches done within the same scope and the variables which have been used in previous studies. The formulation of idea will be developed as the chapter progressed. And finally a theoretical framework and hypotheses will be presented to reflect the study.

Chapter Three provides research methodology that includes research design, specifying population, sample, and variables under study. The chapter then explains the development of measurement and scales for the questionnaires, and statistical techniques to be used in analyzing the data.

Chapter Four will present all the statistical results which have been done on the data. Some of the important development in this study will occur in this part of the thesis where items or factors will be dropped from the research and hypotheses will be tested out for acceptance.

Chapter Five is the discussion of the results which have been analyzed in Chapter Four. Implications, limitations and suggestion for future research will be covered in this chapter.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss and elaborate on the theoretical foundation and empirical results based on the previous researches on the subjects which are being considered in this study. They include overview on organizational stress, stress management, the Big Five personality traits and the turnover intention among working individuals. The literature review will provide thorough and structural findings on the subject matters which will assist the construction of this paper and help identified suitable variables for the study. This chapter will also discuss the theoretical framework which is a very important aspect of the study as it provides the general view and concepts of the study as it explained the relationship among the variables. To conclude the chapter, hypotheses will be proposed.

2.2 Stress Management

Stress is not an unusual occurrence. It affects everyone in everyday life. The challenges to control stress and to assist employee in coping with stress is greater in organizations. The attitude of; *if it's not broken, why fix it?* which most organizations have are not addressing the changes that need to be done in order to manage stress. Stress is such a critical condition that sometimes received less attention than supposed to. And many argued who should be responsible for managing stress (Dewe & O'Driscoll, 2002). Stress appears at each level of management in most fields of work.

This problem should be tackled through better stress management and consistency in the interventions (Bradley & Sutherland, 1994; Donovan & Kleiner, 1994; Johnson, 1995). Managers should be able to understand what stress means by definitions and when the employees are experiencing it or showing the symptoms (Donaldson-Fielder *et. al.*, 2008). The types of intervention could target an individual, organization or the individual-organization interface (Murphy, 1995). Dewe (1994) described the three types of interventions as primary, secondary and tertiary interventions where primary interventions aim to reduce the intensity or number of stressors through job redesign or workload reduction. While secondary interventions are geared towards assisting employees to cope more effectively, typically through a range of stress management training programs. Tertiary interventions are the processes on rehabilitation of employees who already experienced or suffered the consequences of work stress (Dewe, 1994).

The most widely used intervention is Employee Assistance Programme or known as EAPs. This program has shown to be useful in some organizations in dealing with stressed employees (Bradley & Sutherland, 1994; Dewe, 1994; Murphy, 1995). Murphy (1995) in his paper had described the utility of an interdepartmental collaboration between employee assistance programme and human resource management groups to produce comprehensive stress management strategies which target the individuals and organization. Usual approach in stress management is either proactive or reactive. The former being a typical scenario where an organization would wait for something to happen first before formulating a solution towards it, while the later is to prevent it from spreading or escalating (Cooper et al, 2010). This method is usually temporarily or short-term as it implies that the employees have

already become the stress victims. Most of the times, the interventions designed by one department in an organization may not be suitable for other department as it typically focused on certain aspect of the problem and generally will not be comprehensive (Dewe & O’Driscoll, 2002; Murphy, 1995).

First and foremost, in order to design the most suitable interventions and for it to be effective, the term stress must be well understood under each given conditions. Therefore, failure to understand the concepts and the confusions disabled scholars, managers or even organizations in designing effective intervention programs to tackle the stress situation (Dewe, 1994). The term stress often causes difficulties and even though numerous definitions have been developed in the name of research in order to benefit from it, the term “stress” is still poorly understood (Dewe & O’Driscoll, 2002). The research was expanded to discover managers’ and employees’ view on stress and whether the term creates confusion in its meaning (Bradley & Sutherland, 1994; Dewe & O’Driscoll, 2002).

Stress can be tackle at individual, organizational or individual-organizational interface (Murphy, 1995). At any occurrence will require stress to be managed well, as the right amount of stress can give a positive outcome and vice versa. Smith *et. al.* (2009) studied how optimism and stress can affect project success. Some researches focused on finding the positive and/or negative outcomes of stress (Hutri & Linderman, 2002; Smith *et. al.*, 2009). Eventually, if an individual could not manage stress in a positive manner, this would lead to workload (MacDonald, 2003), emotions and health-problem (Baker *et. al.*, 1996; Hutri & Linderman, 2002), burnout, and turnover (Sullivan & Bhagat, 1992; Leung *et. al.*, 2011). Acquiring adequate levels of

skills and knowledge regarding the job scope will help individuals cope with the stress at work (Dewe & O'Driscoll, 2002; Smith *et. al.*, 2009). In general, most organizations are bearing the burden of cost in employee turnover and increasing medical care expenditure apart from productivity being affected and losses in time (Halkos & Bousinakis, 2010).

2.3 Organizational Stress

In the last decade, many researchers from different work backgrounds had dedicated their studies in understanding the definition of stress and to study the important variables which are related to stress (Baker *et. al.*, 1996; Carr *et. al.*, 2011; Johnson, 1995; Kirkcaldy *et. al.*, 2001; Lee & Kleiner, 2005; Lim & Teo, 1996; Manshor *et. al.*, 2003; Sullivan & Bhagat, 1992). Stress is defined as “the experience of opportunities or threats that people perceive as important and also perceive they might not be able to handle or deal with effectively” (Lazarus, 1991). Moorhead & Griffin (1995) defined stress as “a person’s adaptive response to a stimulus that places excessive psychological or physical demands on that person”. Robbins (1993) based from his study on previous literature state that “stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constrain or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important”. According to Cartwright & Cooper (1997), “stress is any force that puts a psychological or physical function beyond its range of stability, producing a strain within the individual”.

Cooper & Marshall (1978), introduced the most significant and widely used model of stress which proposed the sources of stress in six categories: Stress in the job itself, role-based stress, stress due to the changing nature of relationship with other people at work, career stress, stress associated with the organizational structure and climate, and stressors associated with the home and work interface. This concept was basic fundamental in most research on organizational stress related. Over the years this model was given a minor touch by most research, in reference to Cartwright & Cooper (1997) the model was further elaborated but still capturing its originality. The six factors are:

- i. Factors intrinsic to the job
 - a. Working conditions – Noise, lighting, smells and other factors that affect our senses and can affect mood and mental state
 - b. Shift work
 - c. Long hours
 - d. New technology
 - e. Work overload
- ii. Role in the organization
 - a. Role ambiguity
 - b. Role conflict
 - c. Responsibility
- iii. Relationships at work
 - a. Relationships with Superior
 - b. Relationships with subordinates
 - c. Relationships with Colleagues
- iv. Career Development

- a. Job Security
- b. Job Performance
- v. Organizational Structure and Climate
- vi. Home and Work Interface

These six major sources were found as basic fundamentals in most researches regarding stress in workplace (Johnson *et. al.*, 2005; Lim & Teo, 1996; Manshor *et. al.*, 2003; Murphy, 1995; Sullivan & Bhagat, 1992). The incorporation of this model in research studies are very flexible and some researchers applied selective factors from the original structure as different studies have different purpose and objectives. Manshor *et. al.* (2003) conducted a study based on the six major sources of stress by selecting certain variables from the original variables suggested by the model. The study was on occupational stress among Malaysia managers in MNCs using variables such as working condition, workloads, risk and danger, new technology, role ambiguity and role conflict, video display terminal (adverse physical and psychological reaction to prolonged work at a video display terminal, along with the use of computers and career development. From the analysis they found that workloads, working conditions and relationship at work were the main concern of the managers that lead to stress at the workplace. From their results, they also found that certain demographic variables influenced the level of stress among the managers. Another example of study which used the model selectively is a study by Murphy (1995), where the research studied thirteen sources of organizational stress which are within the six basic fundamentals. The stressors were physical environment, role conflict, role ambiguity, interpersonal conflict, job future ambiguity, interpersonal conflict, job future ambiguity, job control, employment opportunities, quantitative

workload, variance in workload, responsibility for people, underutilization of abilities, cognitive demands, and shift work (Murphy, 1995).

Lim & Teo (1996) adopted from Cooper *et. al.* (1988) the 61 items from Occupational Stress Indicator (OSI) which consists of the basic six subscales or variables similar to Cooper & Marshall previous research. The study was conducted among IT personnel in Singapore to investigate the gender differences in occupational stress and coping strategies. The results of the study implied that female employees scored higher than male employee in five factors except for stressor due to home and work interface which does not affect both gender. Female however are more emotional and tend to seek social support for coping strategies. However, the limitation of this study is that it only accounted for a group of IT personnel in Singapore which is mainly dominated by male employees. Issues regarding gender may cause sensitive sparks in people, therefore for future research one should choose an equal battle ground for study.

According to George & Jones (2008), *stressors* or sources of stress can influence a person's level of stress through five main stressors; personal life, job responsibilities, membership in work groups and organizations, work-life balance, and environmental uncertainty. Donovan & Kleiner (1994) mentioned that stress can be derived from three sources: physical, mental and situational. Physical stress is found through overwork, lack of rest and a poor diet. While mental stress can be traced to a person's mental state of mind. It involves our hopes, fears and regrets from our day-to-day life. Situational stress is derived from our interaction with the outside world. For example our roles as husband, father, wife and mother and also our interaction

with the trappings of modern life (such as cars, computers, etc) (Donovan & Kleiner, 1994). According to Idris *et. al.* (2010) stressors vary across cultures and stress management designed for one culture does not suit others. Employee in Western culture was found to have higher sense of well-being compared to Middle East or Asians culture (Idris *et. al.*, 2010). Lay beliefs about stress always relate to under performance and low productivity or as a response to poor working conditions. Idris *et. al.* (2010) made a comparison between Western and Malaysian cultures, they do not differ in term of how they classify job stress, however it was found that they differ in perceiving organizational stressors. Johnson *et. al.* (2005) studied the stress experienced by 26 different occupation types and job roles using the ASSET model based from (Robertson Cooper, 2002b). The variables present in the model are as presented in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1: *ASSET Factor Structure*

Factor	Description
Work relationships	Sources of stress relating to the contacts people have at work with their colleagues/managers.
Your job	Sources of stress relating to the fundamental nature of the job itself.
Overload	Sources of stress relating to workload and time pressures.
Control	Sources of stress relating to the amount of control people have over their work.
Job security	Sources of stress relating to the level of

	job security perceived by people.
Resources and communication	Sources of stress relating to the equipment/ resources available at work and the effectiveness of communication in the workplace.
Work-life balance	Sources of stress relating to the extent to which the demands of work interfere with people's personal and home life.
Pay and benefits	Sources of stress relating to pay and benefits.
Commitment of the organisation to the employee	The extent to which people feel their organisation is committed to them.
Commitment of the employee to the organisation	The extent to which people are loyal and dedicated to their organisation.
Physical health	Physical symptoms associated with stress.
Psychological well-being	Clinical symptoms indicative of stress induced mental ill-health.

*Source: Johnson *et. al.* (2005) from Robertson Cooper (2002b).

The results obtained from the study ranked the 26 occupations within the three categories. And it showed that six occupations are reporting worse than average scores on each of the three studied factors – physical health, psychological well-being and job satisfaction. They are ambulance workers, teachers, social services, customer services – call centres, prison officers and police (Johnson *et. al.*, 2005). However this

results only represents employee working within the UK. Studies in the past had mostly focused on a particular field of work especially service sector like nurses and teachers who face challenges daily when dealing with other people and whose jobs are always associated with high amount of stress (Baker *et. al.*, 1996; Coffey *et. al.*, 2009; Lambert & Hogan, 2010).

MacDonald (2003) studied the effect of task demands and workload on stress and fatigue. In the study, the author broke down the variables of task demand and workload to mental demand, physical demand, time pressure, frustration, effort and getting things right. While MacDonald (2003) studied employees in Australia who worked in manufacturing, Liu *et. al.* (2007) studied a different occupation that requires less physical demand. Liu *et. al.* (2007) discovered seven main stressors through qualitative study in this particular research among Chinese employee. They are; organizational constraints, interpersonal conflict, workload, lack of control, job evaluations, work mistakes, and work/ family conflict. By revealing the significant job stressors Liu *et. al.* (2007) predicted job strains on employee and they also indicate the unique pattern of job stressor-strain relationships. The results required were compared between Chinese and U.S. workers; however they did not emphasize the difference of culture. The other limitation of this study is that it was done only on university employees, thus it does not represents the various occupations in China.

In this paper, I am taking into account that no two people who work under the same working conditions will experience the same level of stress. There are factors that could play such important roles in the stress level such as the support system and personality type. Through this idea we can begin to understand the role of personality