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Work Stress and Job Performance in Malaysia Academic Sector: Role of Social Support as Moderator

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Authors SML and MAB designed the study. Author SML managed the literature searches, performed the statistical analysis, managed the analyses of the study, wrote the protocol, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author MAB has taken care of the whole project during the research period. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to investigate the relationship role conflict, job control, social support and job performance among administration staff in University Utara Malaysia (UUM), Kedah. The research was designed by using quantitative approach and survey was conducted between 6th until 17th April, 2014 in UUM. Besides, 215 questionnaires were collected to analyze the data. Results indicate that a positive and significant relationship found between job control, social support and job performance. Besides, results indicated social support moderate between role conflict and job performance showed significant relationship. Practical implication of this study able to contributes to the UUM employees to be aware of the work stress issues in their workplace and able to maintain their job performance.

Keywords: Job performance; role conflict; job control; social support; Malaysia University; regression analysis.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades the stress had become growing dilemma in organization and cause unfavorable effects on job performance. Stress is a universal element which existing in workplace that affecting employees' performance [1]. There are many barriers that affect the employees in the employment world especially work stresses play big part in organization. Work stress often affects the employees in the workplace, where each employee will feel it at least once in their workplace. Work stress in an organization is a practical problem that not only affects the organization only but the employees mainly become victims of stress. Besides, a study revealed work stress has been becoming challenges to the employers because this issue is rising in employment world [2]. Stress brings result in low productivity, increased absenteeism and collection other employee problems like alcoholism, drug abuse, hypertension and also host of cardiovascular problems to the employees. The employers should realize that stress cannot be avoid or ignore from organization and they have to aware of the employees' situation in organization and try to find out solutions employees able to handle their work stress in organization and perform well in their job to bring benefits to the organization.

This study tends to examine the factors that cause work stress influence on job performance in academic institution. A study revealed that increasing of work stress among the Malaysian organizations is famous issue [3]. Chairman of National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (Niosh) Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye stated that employees are facing the high stress level since is an ignore issue in organization which result them to falling in sick, unable to control their emotional in workplace create many problems to the organization from the survey did shows that 70 percentage of Malaysian employees are suffering with the work relate illness. As consequences, organization will suffer to recover the situation since employees is their main asset. This study point out the causes of work stress that influence job performance of employees in academic field. Besides, these study different from other studies that social support included as moderator to strengthen the relationship between dependent and independent variables.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Job Performance

Performance define as accomplishments of employees and output, that acknowledged by organization in employees works adoption from [4]. Skill, effort and nature of work condition are mixture which stated as part that represents job performance. The rewards that the organization provide to employees either can be in financial form like bonuses, increment in salary or non financial type like vacation benefits, recognition of certificate for the particular achievement of an employee in organization make employee experience high job satisfaction and motivated to achieve high job performance. A study stated that job performance is a measurement of a person that how he or she perform to the job assigned, the job performance will be good if the organization give rewards to the employee who perform well in their job so the rewards able to create high job satisfaction to the employee in the workplace [5]. High management should have a Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as measurement of job performance for their employees to make sure employee aware of expectation from organization that what the employees should achieve in their job task [6].

2.2 Role Conflict

Role conflict defines as multi role play by an individual creates incompatibility of conditions and expectations from the role [7]. According to [8], role stressors affect the job performance in various like switch away the effort to work from employees, it was proven in the theoretical and empirical studies that role conflict negatively affects the job performance. Besides, past research of [9-11] conducted studies with auditors as sample and the result found that role conflict influence employees job performance. According to [12,13] established that role conflict influence the job satisfaction and job performance of employees in an organization. In particular, [14] showed that the role conflict is related to job tension negatively related with the job performance. The relationship was found significant of increase in role conflict will make job tension higher and affect or harmed the work outcome or job performance of the employees in organization. A Meta analysis accessible researcher conducted by [8] examines the relationship between role conflict and role overload have negative relationship with task performance or job performance among 23400 employees. The results provide a strong support the proposed hypotheses that role ambiguity and role overload has a negative effect on job performance. According to [15] conducted a study about role conflict towards employee performance to examine the role conflict have negative and significant relationship with job performance among 131 Civil Servants in Regional Apparatus Work Unit (RAWU) in Indonesia. The study established negative and significant relationship between the role conflict and job performance that the role conflict decrease the job performance. The results provide a strong for the proposed hypotheses that role conflict has a negative towards job performance.

H1: Role conflict negatively influence on job performance

2.3 Job Control

There much research did in job control which state that relationship between job control and job stress, work condition and job performance. As adoption from [16,17] stated that job control is when lack or loss of resource in workplace will cause job stress to the person since unable to complete the job demand. According to [18,19] stated that job control and job autonomy are most important elements that will make employee to experience job satisfaction and perform well because they have authority in their own task they feel comfortable with the job. According to the [20] stated that there are three suggestions about the relationships between job control and job stress. Firstly, perception of an individual towards workplace stress will reduce if they face high job control over specific work condition. Second, the job control in workplace will moderate the relationship between work-related stressors and stress, the relationship is weak between the working environmental stressors and stress when consider job control is high but when job control low the relationship between working environmental stressors and stress are high. Third, job control consider have good sense to make decision. An employee will behave to solve problems in workplace if level of job control high which create productive situation for the organization, besides if a person do not have high level of job control he or she will has less confident to handle a problem or situation in workplace. According to prior studies [21] stated that job control has significantly and positively relationship with job performance. The result of the research shows that employee have better mental health and job performance when there are high level of acceptance compare with high job control. Besides, [22] conducted a study examined the relationship between job control increase learning and job performance among 448 employees from call center in United Kingdom. The study established a significant and positive relationship between job control towards learning and job performance. In a sample

of 777 manufacturing employees in Japan, [23] found job control and coworker support significant and positively related to job performance.

H2: Job control positively influence on job performance

2.4 Social Supports as Potential Moderator

There much authors have classify the social support to certain categories for example there are two dimensions for the social support organization support and supervisor support [24,25]. Recently social support has divide to two categories which are co-worker and supervisor support by [26]. According to [27] stated that social support can be dividing to two categories which consist emotional support and practical support. besides, the practical support define as practical help which get in the workplace can help to increase self motivation and also financial support will boost up the energy level of an employee which consequence good job performance. According to [28] social support at work is an important consideration in increase of organization productivity. According to [29-32] that social support connected to improve the job performance. Research also suggested social support at work is positively related to job performance for example like according [28] conducted a study to examine the relationship of social support towards job performance among 240 public hospital workers in Southeastern, United State. The result that high job performance can be achieve if there is high social support from the supervisor at the workplace. The result showed that social support has positive relationship with task performance. According to [33] conducted a study examined the social support will increase the job performance compared to no social support among 281 students from University of Oklahoma in United States. The study established significant relationship between social support and job performance. As shown in Fig. 1 the hypotheses developed.

H3: Social support positively influence on job performance

H4: Social support moderate the relationship between role conflict and job performance

H5: Social support moderate the relationship between job control and job performance

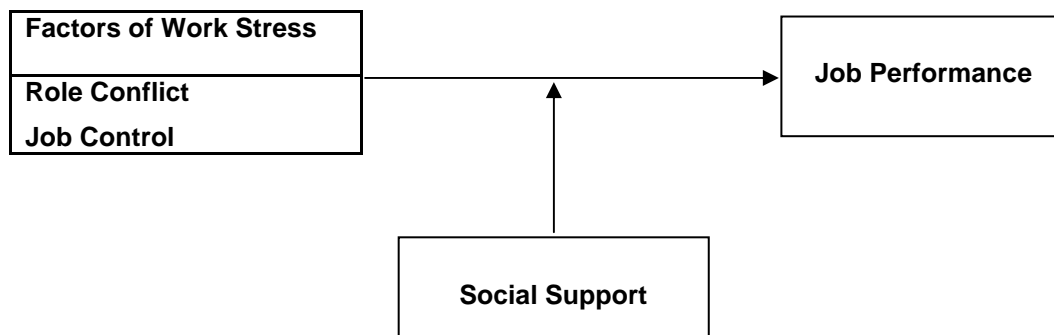


Fig. 1. Model of hypothesis

2.5 Methodology

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship among role conflict, job control, social support and job performance among administrative employees in UUM, Malaysia. Following [34] sample size determination procedure, a sample size of 322 would be requiring for population of 1961. The present study employed convenience sampling (i.e., a non-

probability sampling technique). Besides, 322 questionnaires distributed to the target respondents with 215 returned and usable questionnaires out of 322, the valid response rate was 66.77%. Hence, a valid response rate of 66.77% is supposed sufficient for main analysis in the present study. This rate are valid because according to [35] mentioned that response rate of 30% could considered appropriate for cross-sectional study.

2.6 Measurement

All the questions adoption from the previous studies which the questions are validity was rectified. Section A is related to demographic profile of respondent which consist of personal information will be question in this section, the purpose for this information just for the statistical use only. The section B is the most important part which related to this study that explain the independent and the dependent variables and also the moderate variables. Therefore, five-point scale questions were adopted in section B of the questionnaire.

- In the present study four items (e.g., "I am able to complete each work quickly and record effectively") adapted to measure job performance from prior research [36,37].
- In order to measure employees' perception towards role conflict 8 items (e.g., "I receive an assignment without the manpower to complete it") were adapted from [38].
- To assess job control construct, 5 items (e.g., "Your job allows you freedom to decide how you do your job") were adapted from [39].
- There are four items (e.g., "I have the opportunity to meet with others in my work") were adapted to measure social support from [40].

2.7 Analysis

The data which collected from the respondent through the questionnaire will be sorted and will be test using software of Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 19 for data analysis. With the purpose to examine the relationship among the role conflict, job control, social support and job performance, the existing study apply few methods to analyze the data. The correlation analyses provide information about the relationship between dependent and independent variables. Since the correlation analysis able to illustrate insufficient information about the relationship so that the multiple regression will be conducted as final analyses to determine the strength of the relationships between the variables. (Table 1) shown reliability statistics of the Study Variables. In terms of the internal consistency reliabilities of the study variables, the results show that Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged of the study between .71 and .80, which are within the minimum acceptable value of .70 as suggested by [41]. The results showed in (Table 1) fulfilled the rule of acceptable value suggested by [41].

Table 1. Reliability statistics of the study variables

Variable	No. of items	Cronbach's alpha
Job performance	4	0.8
Role conflict	8	0.78
Job control	5	0.71
Social support	4	0.78

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

The data collected from a sample of UUM administration employees. Female represent 124 (57.70%), while the remaining 91 target participants (i.e., 42.30%) were their male counterparts. the highest age group participants were between 20-30 years old (50.70%). Majority of the respondents were between 20-31 years old (50.70%), 61 participants between 31-40 years old (28.37%), 40 participants between 41-50 years old (18.60%), and remaining 5 of the target participants' age were 51-60 years old (2.33%). Besides, 66 of the target participants were single (35.35%), majority of the target participants were married and representing 62.79%. Besides, the others were 4 respondents representing 1.86%. Highest respond to the questionnaires is Malay participants with 204 (94.88), 7 are Indian (3.26%), only 1 Chinese (0.47%) and other were 3 person representing 1.40%. Muslim who embraces Islam as their religion representing 97.21% and Only 6 of the respondents are Hindu representing 2.79%. Degree holders were 142 (66.05%), 39 (i.e., 18.14%) were holders of Master Degree and PhD and 34 of them, representing 15.81% fall under others categories. Besides, 102 (47.44%) participants have 1-5 years working experience, Forty-one of the target participants have working experience between 6-10 years (19.07%), 33 (15.35%) have been working for 11-15 years. Besides, 21 (9.77%) target participants have been working 16-20 years. Among target participants both 9 (4.19%) have been working their profession between 21-25 years, similarly with participants who have been working for 26-30 years are 9 of them representing 4.19%.

As shown in (Table 2) the mean, standard deviations and correlations were analyzed for each of the 4 variables. For the 5-likert point Scales (job performance, role conflict, job control and social support), and the standard deviations ranged from .50 to .73 (Table 2). As shown in (Table 2) there are 6 relationships found among the variables. First of all, the job control and social support are positively and significant correlated with job performance ($r = .57$ and $.59$, $p < .01$, respectively). However, the correlations between role conflict were negative significant correlation with job performance ($r = -.22$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, both job control and social support were negatively correlated with role conflict ($r = -.32$, $p < .01$ and $-.13$, $p < .05$). Finally the social support was positively related with the job control ($r = .51$, $p < .01$).

Table 2. Mean, standard deviations and correlations for study variables

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1 Job performance	3.6	0.6	1			
2 Role conflict	3.26	0.5	-.22**	1		
3 Job control	3.59	0.54	.57**	-.32**	1	
4 Social support	3.56	0.63	.59**	-.13*	.51**	1

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$ (one tailed test)

As showed in Table 3 the role conflict, job control and social support not significant with the age of employees as significant level (.111, .430 and .453).

Regression analyses were conducted to determine the relationship between the variables. As shown in Table 4 there are three predictor variables (i.e., role conflict, job control and social support) are contribute to job performance. And social support play role as moderator.

Firstly, Hypothesis 1 stated that role conflict is negatively related to job performance. This hypothesis was also tested by using multiple regressions (see Table 4). The result showed that there is negative and not significant relationship between role conflict and job performance. Thus, hypothesis not supported that the higher participants' role conflict at workplace, it not affecting the job performance. The finding showed not significant between role conflict and job performance the reason might be employees well provide with good trainings and orientation to adapt the work environment and gain more skills through the trainings so no confusion of role performance for employees since their schedules, time and division of tasks were arranged.

Table 3. ANOVA: for age

Variables		Sum of squares	df.	Mean square	F	Sig.
Role conflict	Between groups	10.707	33	.324	1.352	.111
	Within groups	43.439	181	.240		
	Total	54.146	214			
Job control	Between groups	9.803	33	.297	1.031	.430
	Within groups	52.135	181	.288		
	Total	61.937	214			
Social support	Between groups	13.410	33	.406	1.015	.453
	Within groups	72.461	181	.400		
	Total	85.871	214			

Hypothesis 2 proposed that job control is positively related to job performance. As shown in (Table 4), a positive and significant relationship found between role conflict and job performance. Hypothesis 4 was supported, such that the higher participants job control, the higher their job performance. These findings similarly supported with previous literature [42-48,23]. Hypothesis 3 proposed that social support positively related to job performance. An examination of results in (Table 4) indicated that social support is positively and significantly related to job performance ($\beta = .31$; $t = 5.06$; $p < .01$). The results provide support for hypothesis 5, indicating higher level of participants' social support at workplace led to increase in job performance. Based on previous literature mentioned that social support as an independent variable that affect the job performance [19,49].

First step to conduct the moderating effect the used sample mean create for the predictor variables as $C_roleconflict = (roleconflict - 3.26)$ where the (3.26) is the mean for role conflict which computed form the descriptive statistic. The present study test the significant of interaction between social support and role conflict as predictors in regression by creating new variable that the product of $C_roleconflict \times C_socialsupport$, this product test in regression together with the original predictor variables role conflict and social support. Hypothesis 4 suggested that social support moderate the relationship between job stress and job performance. As expected, results indicated in (Table 4) that social support moderate between role conflict and job performance showed significant relationship. The results provide support for hypothesis 4, indicating higher level of social support affect in workplace strengthen the relationship between role conflict and job performance. Similar moderating steps used to test the Hypothesis 5. Hypothesis 5 suggested that social support moderate the relationship between job control and job performance. Social support is trying to reproduce the relationship between role job control and job performance but as the results in (Table 4) showed that social support does not moderate the relationship between job control and job performance variables. The hypothesis not supported.

Table 4. Result of the multiple regression analysis (job performance as dependent variable)

Hypotheses	Variable	Beta	SE	t-value	p-value	Findings
H1	Role conflict	-0.01	0.07	-0.68	0.95	Not supported
H2	Job control	0.3	0.07	4.12	0	Supported
H2	Social support	0.31	0.06	5.06	0	Supported
H4	Role conflict x social Support	0.26	0.12	3.22	0	Supported
H5	Job control x social Support	-0.05	0.11	-0.85	0.4	Not supported

Note: * $P < 0.10$, ** $P < 0.50$, *** $P < 0.01$

3.2 Discussion

The main focus of present study is to investigate the relationships between role conflict, job control, social support and job performance among 322 the UUM administration employees. The present study discovered several relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable (i.e. job performance).

Present research was conducted at UUM, Malaysia and towards government employees the results showed that role conflict negatively related with job performance but it is not significant. Furthermore, present study was conducted among UUM employees showed that their job task were clearly defined to them and they are provided with good trainings and orientation which make them able to understand their role and perform well in their workplace. There is no confusion of role performance for the employees since they are well trained to manage their schedules, time, and the division of tasks. Present study's results which obtained from the analysis was revealed that the role conflict unable to create a unique and statistically significant contribution towards the job performance.

Job control was found to be positively related to job performance as the results obtained from multiple regression. These findings similarly supported with previous literature [21,23,42-48,50]. The higher participants' jobs control, the higher their level of job performance.

3.2.1 Social support as potential moderator

Based on previous literature mentioned that social support as an independent variable that affect the job performance [29-32] and positively related with job performance. Similarly results obtained from present study's analyses the third hypothesis was supported that social support positively related with job performance.

According to [51] proposed that social support able to act as moderator. The present study mainly proposed the social support as moderator to strengthen the relationship between independent variables (i.e. role conflict and job control) and job performance. The present study provides evidence that how the social support as moderator was related to job performance. First of all, present study proposed that social support moderate the relationship between role conflict and job performance.

The analysis revealed that social support was associated with job performance, Since hypothesis 4 accepted, social supports plays an important role at workplace because when

the people at workplace favor and have a high level of understanding, role conflict violated and employees able to perform well with support from their management and colleagues. Past studies never tested that social support as a moderator between role conflict and job performance since social support played role as moderator, present study brings out social support significant results as moderator is a new contribution of present research.

The hypothesis 5 was not supported since the social support did not moderate the relationship between job control and job performance. Since the social support not affects the job control and job performance possible there are other factors that may play a significant moderating in this relationship. For example, [47] argued that acceptance moderate the relationship between job control and job performance, while acceptance higher job control also higher and there are significant relationship when acceptance moderate the relationship between job control and job performance.

3.3 Limitation and Recommendation for Future Research

There are several limitation recognized in present study. First of all, the sample size UUM administration employees (n = 215) for this present research consider small, so the findings of present study not able to generalized. Thus, future research sample have to be larger and research should conducted in different university in Malaysia to get more valid results. This study included independent and moderator variables towards job performance. Although in present research moderator variable included still there is gap that mediator not included. Thus, future study can include the mediator variable to make the research carry out new findings.

4. CONCLUSION

“Work stress” has become universal issues that affect employees’ job performance and make them unable to perform well. Regarding to these issues this study conducted to explore the effect of work stress towards employees’ performance among administration employees in UUM, explained the factors work stress which influence job performance. The present study’s findings provide sufficient understanding about the effect of work stress towards employees’ performance and them also affected mentally and emotional because of stress. Besides, the findings also supported that social support as moderator able to improve the job performance in workplace. Better stress management have high tendency to solve employees problems in organization, top management should concern about this issues and take appropriate effort to improve employees’ stress at workplace and increase the job performance.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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APPENDIX

Coefficients^a					
Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.893	.521		3.630	.000
Role_conflict	-.005	.072	-.004	-.068	.946
Job control	.299	.073	.267	4.115	.000
Social support	.311	.061	.327	5.055	.000

a. Dependent variable: job performance

Coefficients^a					
Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.133	.262		4.316	.000
Role conflict	.224	.066	.187	3.391	.001
Social support	.489	.054	.515	9.130	.000
Role conflictxsocial	-.258	.080	-.183	-3.221	.001

a. Dependent variable: job performance

Coefficients^a					
Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.852	.238		3.572	.000
Job control	.392	.068	.351	5.759	.000
Social support	.377	.057	.397	6.606	.000
Jobcontrolt xsocial	-.045	.053	-.046	-.847	.398

a. Dependent variable: job performance

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