

DOES WORK STRESS HARM JOB PERFORMANCE? A SURVEY STUDY AMONG YOUNG URBAN PROFESSIONAL GROUP (YUPPIES)

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this comparative study is to determine the influence of work stress towards job performance. A quantitative survey of 200 Malaysian young urban professional groups (YUPPIES) has been conducted. The main analysis first reveals that there is no relationship between extrinsic effort and job performance ($r = 0.147$, $p = 0.145$) for female YUPPIES and also for male YUPPIES ($r = 0.038$, $p = 0.707$). Second, there is significant and positive relationship between extrinsic reward and job performance for both female ($r = 0.550$, $p = 0.000$) and male ($r = 0.399$, $p = 0.000$) YUPPIES. Finally, there is no relationship between overcommitment and job performance ($r = 0.117$, $p = 0.248$) for female YUPPIES. However, there is significant and positive relationship between overcommitment and job performance ($r = 0.423$, $p = 0.000$) for male YUPPIES. Based on the findings, two interesting results have been discovered. First, extrinsic reward does not negatively affect performance for both gender and second, overcommitment does not negatively affect performance for female YUPPIES. Therefore, in this case, work stress has been discovered to give positive influence on job performance. These works illustrate and provide some views in organizational management and human capital development from Malaysian working environment.

KEYWORDS: *Work stress, extrinsic effort, extrinsic reward, overcommitment, & job performance*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Job performance is the general attitude that people have about their jobs. Job performance comprises two elements which are quantity and quality of outcomes from individual or group effort attainment (Schermerhorn, 2005). Role theory suggests that employee job performance is a function of both the

individual and organization. This theory suggests the performance include both psychological (individual contribution) and sociological (organizational framework) perspective (Welbourne, Johnson, & Erez, 1998). Meanwhile, according to identity theory, it is not the existence of roles but their saliency that affect behaviour (Burke, 1991). Based on the combination of role theory and identity theory, Welbourne, Johnson, and Erez (1998) established five dimensions for job performance which are job role, career role, innovator role, team member, and organization role.

In discussing the various dominance factors that affect job performance, a plethora of research has discovered that work stress could deliver significant negative effects on job performance (e.g., Bekkouche, Holmes, Whittaker, & Krantz, 2011; Opacka-Juffry & Mohiyeddini, 2012). Work stress refers to psychological, physical, and behavioural responses to work related demands over a discrete or short-term period (Dollard, Winefield, & Winefield, 2003). As for example, Pflanz and Ogle (2006) found that approximately 27.4 percent (%) of the military population reported significant work stresses, leading to several negative effects, including absenteeism, poor health, and poor job performance.

Therefore, the main purpose of the study was to examine the influence of work stress on job performance. This it is important as to provide insights on the overview of defined work stress components that can potentially determine job performance since previous empirical studies have delivered inconsistent findings. For instance, even though many of empirical studies have discovered that work stress leads to negative outcomes (e.g., Braveman, Egerter, & Mockenhaupt, 2011; Opacka-Juffry & Mohiyeddini, 2012), however, some studies also have discovered that work stress leads to several positive work outcomes such as learning value and employees' growth (e.g., Ismail, Saudin, Ismail, Samah, Bakar, & Aminudin, 2015; Mathur, Vigg, Sandhar, & Holani, 2007). For instance, De Jonge, Spoor, Sonnentag, Dormann, and van den Tooren (2012) found that work stress has positive correlation with motivation to learn and active problem solving. Therefore, we believe that these incompatible outcomes need to be addressed.

Furthermore, there is lack of attention to consider the influence of work stress on job performance among younger employees. Stress experienced by young employees can be very different from stress experienced by adults because of differing psychosocial developments. For instance, Sawang and Newton (2018) found that young employees view job stress due to (1) lack of opportunity to learn, (2) poor social interaction, and (3) lack of opportunity to exercise initiative.

Hence, the present study is fully justified. In addition, this study also aims to conduct a comparative analysis of the proposed relationship between male and female YUPPIES. Previous studies have discovered that gender plays a significant result in the level of work stress. For example, Purvanova and Muros (2010) found that women tend to experience more burnout than men. Their findings also showed that women are emotionally exhausted slightly more than men. Therefore, the current study is deemed beneficial to provide insights of work stress profile among YUPPIES in Klang Valley, at least an overview of the most current situation.

Effort-Reward Imbalance (ERI) Model

For the purpose of this study, effort-reward imbalance (ERI) model has been referred. According to the model, effort at work is ideally reciprocated by socially defined rewards that include money, esteem, and status control in terms of promotion prospects and job security. However, an imbalance between efforts spent and rewards received at work will lead to work stress experience (see Figure 1). The model also predicts that the experience of imbalance will be more frequent and more damaging in employees who are excessively committed to work. The ERI questionnaire assesses effort at work (time pressures and demands), and perceived reward, which includes three sub-domain components of esteem, job promotion, and job security. An additional measure of overcommitment incorporates intrinsic or personal characteristics that may mediate personal or subjective experiences of stressors.

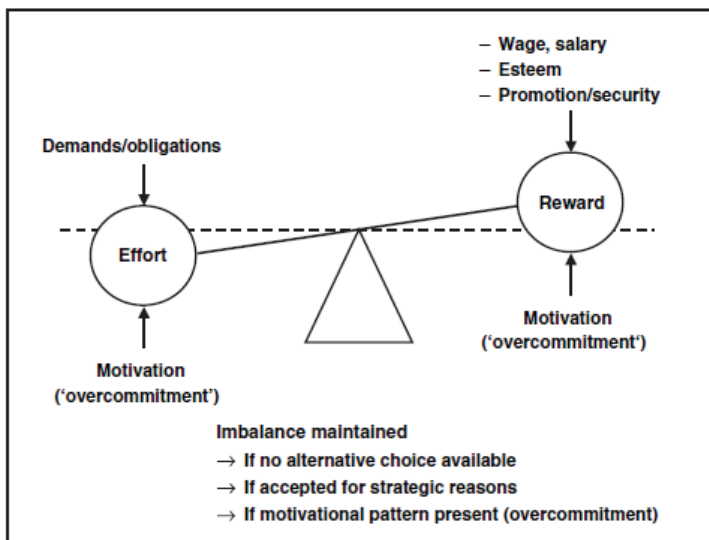


Figure 1: Effort Reward Imbalance Model
(Source: Weyers, Peter, Boggild, Jeppesen, & Siegrist, 2006)

2.0 INFLUENCE OF WORK STRESS ON JOB PERFORMANCE

Work stress has been found as one of the most importance subject of organizational management and stress has been associated with numerous negative impacts such such as hypertension and others health problems (Wan, Haverly, & Hammer, 2018), burnout and less safety performance (Schnall, Dobson, Rosskam, & Elling, 2018), negative emotional well-being (Sharma, Yadava, & Yadava, 2001), and others negative consequences.

Smith, Hughes, DeJoy, and Dyal (2018) revealed that both work stress and work-family conflict predicted burnout and burnout negatively influenced personal protective equipment compliance, adherence to safety work practices, and safety reporting and communication. Findings from both Safaria et al., (2011) and Hauck, Snyder, and Cox-Fuenzalida (2008), work stress has significant negative effects such as frustration, depression, and poor job performance. In a similar vein, Warraich, Ahmed, Ahmad and Khoso (2014) highlighted that work load, role conflict, and inadequate monetary rewards are the main causes of stress among employees in which there is 22.8 % variation in job performance as explained by stress with the beta value of 0.210 for workloads, 0.208 for role conflict, and 0.330 for inadequate monetary reward.

In addition, demographic variables such as gender, age, salary range, and others also have been discovered by previous researches to have some impacts in the level of work stress and job performance (Roberts, Lapidus, & Chonko, 1997). For instance, both Slišković and Seršić (2011) and Wege and Siegrist (2018) discovered women are twice stressful as compare to men. Next, based on a comparative study of 332 men and 129 women employed by financial companies, González-Morales, Peiró, Rodríguez, and Greenglass' (2006) results showed that women used social support coping more frequently than men when it come in stress management. On other hand, instead of high level of work stress among women, Blackmore, Stansfeld, Weller, Munce, Zagorski, and Stewart (2007) found that high job strain was significantly associated with depression among men and lack of social support at work was significantly associated with depression in both genders. Therefore, this study also aims in providing a comparative data on both genders. Research model of this study is stipulated in Figure 1. Based on this reasoning and on the findings in previous research, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

- H₁: There is a significance and negative relationship between extrinsic effort and job performance of female young urban professional group (YUPPIES).
- H₂: There is a significance and negative relationship between extrinsic effort and job performance of male young urban professional group (YUPPIES).
- H₃: There is a significance and negative relationship between extrinsic reward and job performance of female young urban professional group (YUPPIES).
- H₄: There is a significance and negative relationship between extrinsic reward and job performance of male young urban professional group (YUPPIES).
- H₅: There is a significance and negative relationship between overcommitment and job performance of female young urban professional group (YUPPIES).
- H₆: There is a significance and negative relationship between overcommitment and job performance of male young urban professional group (YUPPIES).

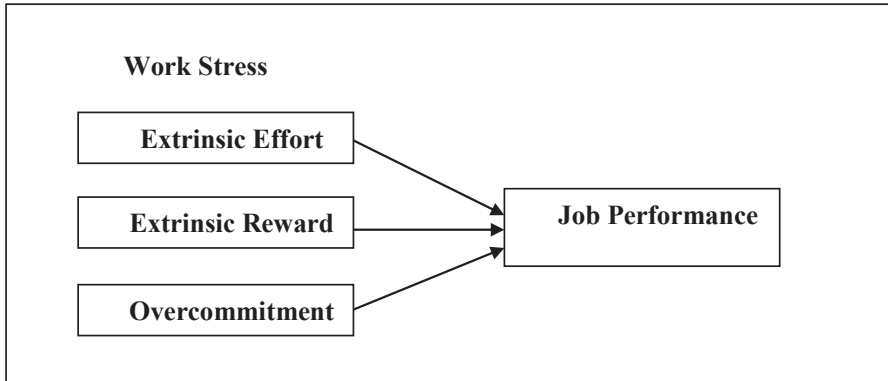


Figure 2: Research Model

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study used a quantitative and cross-sectional study and had focused on the relationship between work stress and job performance of young urban professional group (YUPPIES). The YUPPIES can describe as a young university-educated adult who works in a well-paid profession and lives and works in or near the urban area. The age range of this group is the one who

were born from the 1980 (40 years old) and below. In particular, a sample of 200 respondents was drawn from the population. A total of 200 valid responses were received. Profile of the respondents is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Profile of the Respondents

Profile	Female		Male	
	No.	%	No.	%
Age				
18-28	52	52.0	40	40.0
29-39	35	35.0	49	49.0
40-50	13	13.0	11	11.0
Highest Education Qualification				
SRP/PMR	1	1.0	2	2.0
SPM/STPM	22	22.0	29	29.0
Undergraduate	39	39.0	39	39.0
Postgraduate	35	35.0	24	24.0
Others	3	3.0	6	6.0
Status				
Bachelor	50	50.0	38	38.0
Married	45	45.0	61	61.0
Single parent	5	5.0	1	1.0
Income level				
<RM 1000	6	6.0	9	9.0
RM 1000-RM 2000	29	29.0	25	25.0
RM 2001-RM 3000	22	22.0	26	26.0
RM 3001-RM 4000	20	20.0	9	9.0
RM 4001-RM 5000	10	10.0	12	12.0
>RM 5000	13	13.0	19	19.0

In this research, work stress scale by Msaouel et al., (2012) was employed which examine work stress based on effort-reward imbalance questionnaire (17-items). In measuring job performance, role-based performance scale (RBPS) by Welbourne, Johnson, and Erez (1997) was employed. The job performance contains 20-items.

For the purpose of the study, the normality of the data was examined based on the value of skewness and kurtosis. The value of skewness should fall within the range of -2.0 to +2.0 to indicate the normal distribution; otherwise, the distribution for the respective items departs from normality (Mardia, 1985).

Next, this study examined the reliability of the constructs by looking at the Cronbach's alpha coefficient to indicate how well the constructs in a set are positively correlated to one another. In general, the reliabilities less than 0.60 are considered to be poor, those in the 0.70 range are acceptable, and those over 0.80 are good (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013, p. 293). For the main analysis, pearson correlation was used to test the proposed relationship.

4.0 RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Table 3 indicates the normality results for both data. The value of skewness should fall within the range of -2.0 to $+2.0$ to indicate the normal distribution; otherwise the distribution for the respective items departs from normality (Mardia, 1985). Based on the results of normality test, this study fulfilled the assumption of normality (refer Table 3). Next, based on Table 4, all variables in this study were found to be reliable (more than 0.60).

Table 3: Normality Results

Variable	Female		Male	
	Skewness	Kurtosis	Skewness.	Kurtosis
Independent Variables:				
Extrinsic Effort	0.14	- 0.44	- 0.24	- 0.21
Extrinsic Reward	- 0.28	0.50	- 0.38	0.23
Overcommitment	- 0.35	- 0.36	0.52	- 0.31
Dependent Variable:				
Job Performance	-0.60	1.69	1.16	0.99

Table 4: Reliability Results

Variable	Female		Male	
	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Independent variables:				
Extrinsic Effort	0.60	5	0.82	5
Extrinsic Reward	0.77	6	0.72	6
Overcommitment	0.78	6	0.85	6
Dependent Variable:				
Job Performance	0.95	20	0.90	20

Main Findings

The descriptive analyses were carried out in order to examine mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) of the variables. All means scores were above the midpoint of 2.5, which indicate both gender had agreed they have high work stress level and also job performance (refer Table 5).

Table 5: Mean Analyses

Variables	Female		Male	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Independent variables:				
Extrinsic Effort	3.45	0.56	3.42	0.72
Extrinsic Reward	3.46	0.60	3.41	0.58
Overcommitment	3.07	0.70	3.16	0.75
Dependent Variable:				
Job Performance	3.89	0.54	3.90	0.42

Table 6: Pearson Correlation Results

	Female	Male
Extrinsic Effort		
Pearson Correlation	0.147	0.038
Sig.	0.145	0.707
N	100	100
Extrinsic Reward		
Pearson Correlation	0.550**	0.399**
Sig.	0.000	0.000
N	100	100
Overcommitment		
Pearson Correlation	0.117	0.423**
Sig.	0.248	0.000
N	100	100

Pearson correlation was used to analyze the strength of association between all variables in this research study. Based on Table 6, the first independent variable which is extrinsic effort indicated that there is no relationship between extrinsic effort and job performance ($r = 0.147, p = 0.145$) for female YUPPIES and also for male YUPPIES ($r = 0.038, p = 0.707$). Therefore, H1 and H2 were rejected. Second results indicate that there is significant and positive relationship between extrinsic reward and job performance for both female ($r = 0.550, p = 0.000$) and male ($r = 0.399, p = 0.000$) YUPPIES. Therefore, H3 and H4 were rejected. Finally, there is no relationship between overcommitment

and job performance ($r = 0.117, p = 0.248$) for female YUPPIES. However, there is significant and positive relationship between overcommitment and job performance ($r = 0.423, p = 0.000$) for male YUPPIES. Figure 3 and 4 summarizes the final model for both data. Therefore, H5 and H6 were rejected.

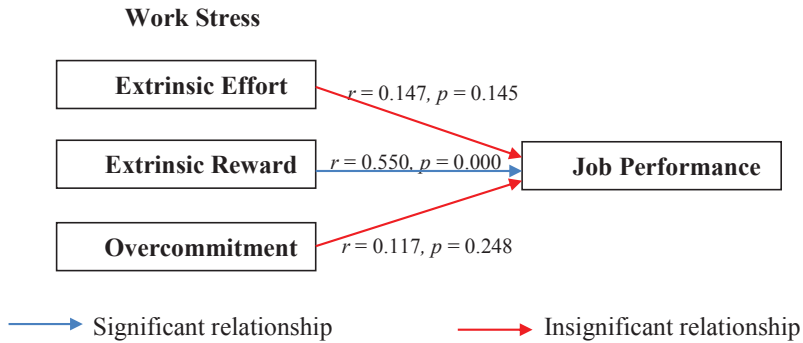


Figure 3: Final Model (Female YUPPIES)

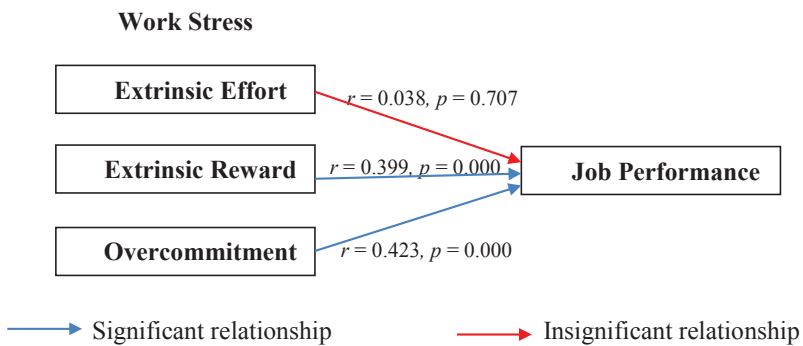


Figure 4: Final Model (Male YUPPIES)

5.0 DISCUSSION

The analysis shows that the contributions of various specific work stressors towards job performance which can meaningfully be condensed into three components. These factors are extrinsic reward, extrinsic effort, and overcommitment. The present study did not find evidence for lower performance among employees reporting high stress. Instead, work stress has been discovered to give positive influence on job performance.

Quite likely, the employees are self-selected for high achievement and will defend work performance even in the face of high stress. For instance, few researchers have discovered that employees' personality traits might acts

creativity and performance enabler and also the source of conflict, failure, and organizational problems (Bosworth, Feaganes, Vitaliano, Mark, & Siegler, 2001). In addition, a highly emotional intelligence employee for instance, has been discovered to be very effective in coping with environmental pressures (Tabari & Ghorbani, 2009). Another importance reason of explaining these results is due to eustress. According to Selye (1974), positive stress or eustress pertains to an exciting event stimulating a person to feel glad or happy as a bride, before the marriage ceremony in which explaining on why sometimes stress could also lead to several positive outcomes. For instance, Mathur, Vigg, Sandhar, and Holani (2007) indicated that stress is necessary up to certain extent to increase performance and the study had revealed that a positive affect that is job performance increases with the increase in stress. Similarly, Ismail, Saudin, Ismail, Samah, Bakar, and Aminudin (2015) discovered that both physiological ($\beta=0.42$; $t=4.00$) and psychological ($\beta=0.30$; $t=2.60$) stress was positively and significantly correlated with job performance. Therefore, not all stressors are bad and harmful and some of them can deliver positive impact towards job performance.

As such, the management must focus on creating a supportive organizational climate in which such climate could help in developing a sense of belongingness which helps the employees to reduce their stress. Second, the management should provides many forms of reward such as base pay, motivations, commission, acknowledgment, choice making parts, advancement, adaptable working hours, and others. Armstrong (2007) point out that rewards can act as a mission that the employees are working hard to fight for, and as an instrument which gives esteemed results. Third is by improving job content such as responsibility, recognition, opportunity for achievement, and advancement, or improving core job characteristics, job autonomy, and providing feedback. Moreover, career planning and counselling also could help the employees to obtain professional advice regarding career paths that would help them to achieve personal goals. Then, the implementation of stress management programs such periodical workshops for control and reduction of stress. Such workshops may help individuals to learn the methods of overcoming their personal and family problems.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this study is to examine the influence of work stress on job performance through a comparative study between male and female YUPPIES. The main components that had been focused in this study are extrinsic effort, extrinsic reward, and overcommitment. Interestingly, the study has discovered that some components such extrinsic reward and overcommitment does deliver positive influence instead of negative influence as expected and highlighted by most research. Although the findings are interesting, there are some limitations need to be addressed. First, this study was conducted among young YUPPIES in Klang Valley only which may not represent entire population. Therefore, future research needs to enlarge the scope of study. Then, employing a self-administered survey and cross sectional study could have limited our knowledge on causality effect. Further investigation using mixed method study, multilevel study or longitudinal research would address these issues. Finally, future studies may also improve the proposed model by adding further variables that could more comprehensive in explaining the relationship between work stress and job performance.

Conflict of Interest

The authors confirm that there are no conflicts of interest.

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