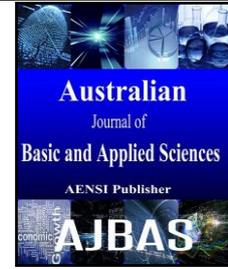




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Workplace Stress Management Model for Malaysian Quantity Surveyors

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to provide the stress management model, which was developed in order to manage stress level for the Quantity Surveyors in Malaysia. Work related stress is difficult to evaluate and measure as it depends on the individual thinking either positive or negative. Quantity Surveyor (QS) is one of the construction professionals that are being exposed to have high workload leading to long working hour, multitasking and important involvement to complete the construction projects. The study on how QS can managed their workplace stress level resulted with the SAID Stress Management Model.

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INTRODUCTION

Work-related stress is often difficult to evaluate and to define as it depends very much on the definitions and methodologies used by the particular researches (Broughton, A., 2010). It also has some subjective elements that depend on the nature each individual and their responses to stress factors. Stress at work has been increasingly regarded as an inevitable part of modern life, which leads to physical disorders, mental and behaviour deviation. It was discovered, 68.4% construction professional in Malaysia had taken time off work due to occupational stress (AbdullahZawawi, A., *et al.*, 2014). Similar situation was discovered in China, Taiwan, India, Russia, United Kingdom, Hong Kong and U.A.E were reported have a high stress level (AbdullahZawawi, A., *et al.*, 2014; Bahrami, H., 2010).

Based on the published documents, stress is defined as the physical and emotion responses when people confronted with an unreasonable condition that viewed as a threatens, constraints and helplessto anything that perceived as a difficulty (Topper, E.F., 2007; Karim, N., 2007; Rehman, H., 2008; Ibem, E.O., 2011). As a result, it will becreatingan imbalance when the requirements do not match theircapabilities, resources or needs. In an organisational context, occupational stress is known as job stress and/or work stress (Ismail, A., *et al.*, 2009) thatoccur when there are conflict between job demands and capacity to meet desirable (Ahmad, Z.A., *et al.*, 2009).

Construction industry is as one of the most challenging, labour-intensive and dangerous working environments (Wong, J., *et al.*, 2010). The stressors in the construction field are divided into three categories, which are task, inter-personal and organisational (Leung, M.Y., *et al.*, 2009).

In year 2011, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Y.A.B. Dato' Sri Mohd Najib Tun Razak announced to liberalise QS professional as one of 27 services sectors in the global market to attract more investments to Malaysia hence provided them with challenges to be more professionals. This study narrow down to focus on the QSs profession who are parts of the construction professionals. They are indispensable specialist in the construction design team and their roles are important to fulfil all tasks such as quotation, forecasting the probable cost, taking off, tendering, contracting works and so on. In addition, their scopes of work-tasks are very wide and need the consistency to ensure the project achieve the target and also completed on time, within budget and according to specification (Hussin, W.W., 2010; Wahab, A.B., 2010). As a result, they are exposed to have high workload (Haynes, N., 2004; Haynes, N., 2004) and work long hours (Love, P.E., 2010). If this phenomena continue in continuous manner, QS will face a serious problems as it expose them to a range of stressors which will influencing their level of productivity in organisation as well as their lifestyle.

The previous research shown that 68% construction professional suffered from stress, anxiety, or depression (CIOB, 2006). As early as in

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1980s, the stress towards Construction professionals had been researched (Stranks, J., 2005). This research (Stranks, J., 2005) listed the stressful professions and jobs as shown in **Table 1**. It based on 0 -10 scales where the QS were classified having stress level of 7.5 on the scale of 10. The level of stress is at par with pilots (civil aviation) and

journalism. Further supported this research, Leung *et al.* (2009), the stressors among construction professionals, which highlighted that the QS profession in Hong Kong faced the most provided stressors in all three categories that it listed (**Table 2**) for the construction professionals.

Table 1: The more stressful professions and jobs.

The more stressful professions and jobs [11]			
Mining	8.5	Broadcasting	6.8
Police	7.7	Doctor	6.8
Construction Building	7.5	Nursing/ midwifery	6.5
Pilot (civil aviation)	7.5	Film production	6.5
Journalism	7.5	Musician	6.3
Advertising	7.3	Ambulance service	6.3
Density	7.3	Teacher	6.2
Actor	7.2	Social worker	6.0

Table 2: Stressors among construction professionals. Source [8].

STRESSORS	PROFESSIONALS				
	AR	EN	QS	CM	C-P
INTERPERSONAL					
-Type A behaviour			/		
-Work family conflict	/	/	/	/	
-Relationship with others (social/workgroup)	/		/	/	/
-Distrust			/		
TASK					
-Work overload	/	/	/	/	/
-Work under load			/		
-Role conflict & ambiguity	/	/	/	/	/
-Job specify			/		
ORGANISATIONAL					
-Poor work environment		/	/	/	/
-Lack of feedback			/		/
-Lack of autonomy	/		/		
-Unfair reward & treatment		/	/		
-Organisational structure & climate				/	/

Note * :AR-Architects EN-Engineers QS-Quantity Surveyor CM-Construction Managers C-P-Other Construction Professionals

Hence, the QS occupational stress needs to be managed accordingly. It is important to note the stress management interrelated to enhance a better value in the construction project outcomes as well as encourage creativity and clear focus (Jaapar, A., *et al.*, 2007). This research provided the model how to manage the stress level among the Malaysian QSs. The research investigated the factors contributed to workplace stress in QS organisations; analysed the workplace stress issues and provided solutions to QS organisations by producing a model to manage and reduce workplace stress among QS within their organisation.

Methodology:

This research used the quantitative method and the data collection instrument is by using questionnaire survey. Due to limited time and geographical constraints, the research limited to the private QS Consultant Companies registered with Board of Quantity Surveyors (BOQS) Malaysia located in Shah Alam, Selangor. The questionnaire

surveys were distributed by hand to four (4) QS respondents randomly selected in each 15 QS Consultant Companies who are agreed to participate. Total population of the respondents were 60.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Basic data analysis of "Descriptive Analysis" was employed. The descriptive analysis refers to the transformation of raw data into a form that will make them easy to understand and interpret (Mohd Nor, M.R.K., 2009) properly.

(i) Factors contributed to stress (Stressors):

Based on analysis of the questionnaire, the main factors contributed to stress among QSs were the quantity of work and exposed to time pressure and deadlines; inadequate staffing or budget; lack of recognition, motivation and reward for a good job done by top management or the boss; management perceived as being non supportive; stress management not a priority in organisation; long

working hours and rigid working procedures; poor communication and relations within the organisation and top management; personal conflicts on the job; autocratic management and strict discipline; faced with family problems; unsuitable of working environment; personal conflicts within the organisation; and sexual harassment and bullying.

Based on the stressors above, it was discovered that different QSs perceived occupational stress differently. These are due to differences in their responsibilities and the stages of tasks involved in project life cycle. Normally their schedule is very

tight due to their wide involvement in construction projects starting from feasibility study until final account stage. Hence, it exposed them to more occupational stress that interfaced between individual capability and capacity.

(ii) *Strategies to plan the best practices of the QS:*

The result of this part of the questionnaire produced the alternative stress management techniques practiced among QSs. As a result, it documented as research outcome, which illustrated in figure below.

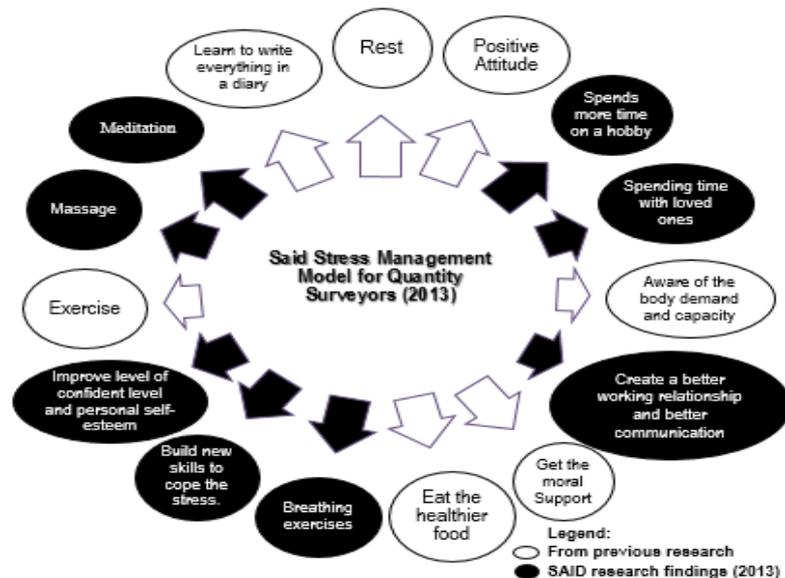


Fig. 1: Research outcome

Adopted and modified from the “ARSENAL” system (Thompson, H., 2010), the Said Stress Management Model for QS suggested 8 new activities that could be adopted to eliminate or to reduce stress in QS professions. The suggested activities listed in Figure 1 are not limited for QS professions.

Summary:

By having the Said Stress Management Model (Said, N., 2013) produced by this research, the workplace stress issues for QS's will be able to be reduced and be better managed. Hence, workplace stress due to anxiety and depression can be minimised and ensuring better productivity in construction industry. It is hoped that this preliminary study will be starting platform for a more comprehensive research. This model can be commercialised by collaborating this effort with BOQS and other agencies such as JKR, CIOB and etc. Human Resource Department of any organisation in construction industry will be benefited if the model to be use in handling stress issues of the personnel. Finally, to manage the stress

level, it needs a positive attitude thinking and awareness from each individual.

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