

## A Review on Occupational Stress Towards Academician Health and Wellbeing

### *Tinjauan terhadap Tekanan Pekerjaan ke atas Kesihatan dan Kesejahteraan Ahli Akademik*

Sohana Binti Abdul Hamid<sup>1</sup>, Ranita Binti Manap<sup>2</sup>, Zahanim binti Ahmad<sup>3</sup>, Siti Fatimah bt Md. Shariff<sup>4</sup>

Accepted	Reviewed	e-Journal Upload
14 SEPTEMBER 2018	22 NOVEMBER 2018	09 JANUARI 2019

#### **ABSTRACT**

*Academic stress had been prevalent in universities all around the world. This shows that environment no longer provides the low-stress working condition that academician can enjoyed. Extensive change is evident in higher education in Malaysians but there have been few studies of the effect of work stress on wellbeing in the higher education sector. The main aim of the review was to determine the factors associated with occupational stress influence academician physical health and psychological wellbeing. Job stressor resulted in poorer psychological wellbeing. Greater psychological wellbeing was associated with greater physical wellbeing. This in turn will impede the productivity of the organization such as teaching, supervision, publication, training, student service, administrative duties, and social responsibility productivity. The findings suggest that private university management should have some proper interventions are required to minimize stress at work place.*

**Keywords:** *Stress, Occupational Stress, Physical Health, psychological wellbeing, academicians.*

#### **ABSTRAK**

*Tekanan bagi para akademik telah berleluasa di universiti di seluruh dunia. Ini menunjukkan bahawa persekitaran tidak lagi menyediakan persekitaran kerja tekanan yang rendah yang boleh dinikmati oleh ahli akademik. Perubahan luas adalah jelas dalam pendidikan tinggi di kalangan rakyat Malaysia tetapi terdapat sedikit kajian tentang kesan tekanan kerja terhadap kesejahteraan dalam sektor pendidikan tinggi. Tujuan utama kajian adalah menentukan faktor-faktor yang berkaitan dengan tekanan kerja yang mempengaruhi kesihatan fizikal ahli akademik dan kesejahteraan psikologi. Tekanan kerja mengakibatkan kesejahteraan psikologi yang lebih buruk. Kesejahteraan psikologi yang lebih besar dikaitkan dengan kesejahteraan fizikal yang lebih besar. Ini seterusnya akan menghalang produktiviti organisasi seperti pengajaran, pengawasan, penerbitan, latihan, perkhidmatan pelajar, tugas pentadbiran, dan produktiviti tanggungjawab sosial. Penemuan menunjukkan bahawa pengurusan universiti swasta sepatutnya mempunyai campur tangan yang sewajarnya diperlukan untuk mengurangkan tekanan di tempat kerja.*

**Kata kunci:** *Tekanan, Tekanan Kerja, Kesihatan Fizikal, kesejahteraan psikologi, ahli akademik.*

<sup>1</sup> Lecturer, Pusat Pengajian Teras. Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor. sohana@kuis.edu.my

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer, Fakulti Pengurusan Muamalah. Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor. ranita@kuis.edu.my

<sup>3</sup> Lecturer, Pusat Pengajian Teras. Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor. zahanim@kuis.edu.my

<sup>4</sup> Lecturer. Faculty of Nursing and Health Sciences. Kolej Universiti Islam Melaka. sitifatimah@kuim.edu.my

## 1. Introduction

Academic stress had been prevalent in universities all around the world. This shows that environment no longer provides the low-stress working environment that academician can enjoyed. Evidence shows that work related stress has a negative impact on employee job performance, and their physical and psychological wellbeing (Sackey & Sanda, 2009).

Academic staff has a major role to play in achieving the objectives of the institution. The performance of the staff, both as teachers and researcher also as manager determines to large extent, the quality of student the experience of higher education and has significant on impact of the student learning and thereby on the contribution that such institution can make to society (Rowley, 1996). Responsibility for others is often associated with significant job stress. The impact of job stress experienced by the university employees was highly significant because it may affect not only the educators but also their learners (Sarafino & Ewing, 1999). This in turn will impede the productivity of the organization such as teaching, supervision, publication, training, student service, administrative duties, and social responsibility.

In 1964, Selye, was first to use the term “stress” to describe a set of physical and psychological responses to adverse conditions or influences (cited from Fevre et al, 2003). Occupational stress can be defined as a disruption of the emotional stability of the individual that induces a state of disorganization in personality and behavior (Nwadiani, 2006). A stressor may be defined as any “demand made by the internal or external environment that upsets a person’s balance and for which restoration is needed” (Herbert, 1997: Larson, 2004). Job stressors may be referring to any characteristic of the workplace that poses a threat to the individual (Bridger et al., 2007). They affect organizational performance by reducing productivity and efficiency which affect the organization negatively (Dua, 1994; Brown & Uehara, 2008; Reskin, 2008). Furthermore, studies have indicated that continuous depletion of resources would lead to negative load effects (e.g fatigue) (Dua, 1994)

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Study design

In order to evaluate the extent of occupational stress for university teaching staff and specifically to reveal predicted variables, which may explain this experience in this understudied occupational group, a systematic literature review (SLR) approach has been used. Few studies have investigated the mediating impact of occupational stress on the relationship between employee health and wellbeing specifically focused on university educators. A systematic literature review was thus conducted was to determine the factors associated with occupational stress influence academician physical health and psychological wellbeing.

### 2.2 Search strategy

Article searching was performed electronically to locate peer reviewed articles. Four databases including Google Scholar, Science Direct, and Ovid. Searched were conducted using the terms occupational stress, burnout, academics, educators, teaching staff, lecturers, and health and wellbeing. Papers were limited to English language peer-reviewed empirical investigations of burnout in private university teaching staff. These keywords and titles words were selected based on those found in majority of paper collected earlier during the

review process. Search was conducted out of 64 articles from Google Scholar, 60 articles from databased Science Direct, 23 articles from Research Gate and 13 articles from Embase - Ovid databased. 30 articles were duplicate were removed. 111 articles were examined and 106 were excluded because the articles not meet the criteria. (Figure. 1). However only five papers met the criteria and were included in the review. Among which five were coded by author name, keywords, methods and data sources. (Figure. 1 Flowchart of articles selected on the systematic review.

Fig. 1: Flowchart of articles selected on the systematic review.

A detailed data extraction form was used to reveal relevant information from each paper.

**Fig. 1 Flowchart of articles selected on the systematic review.**

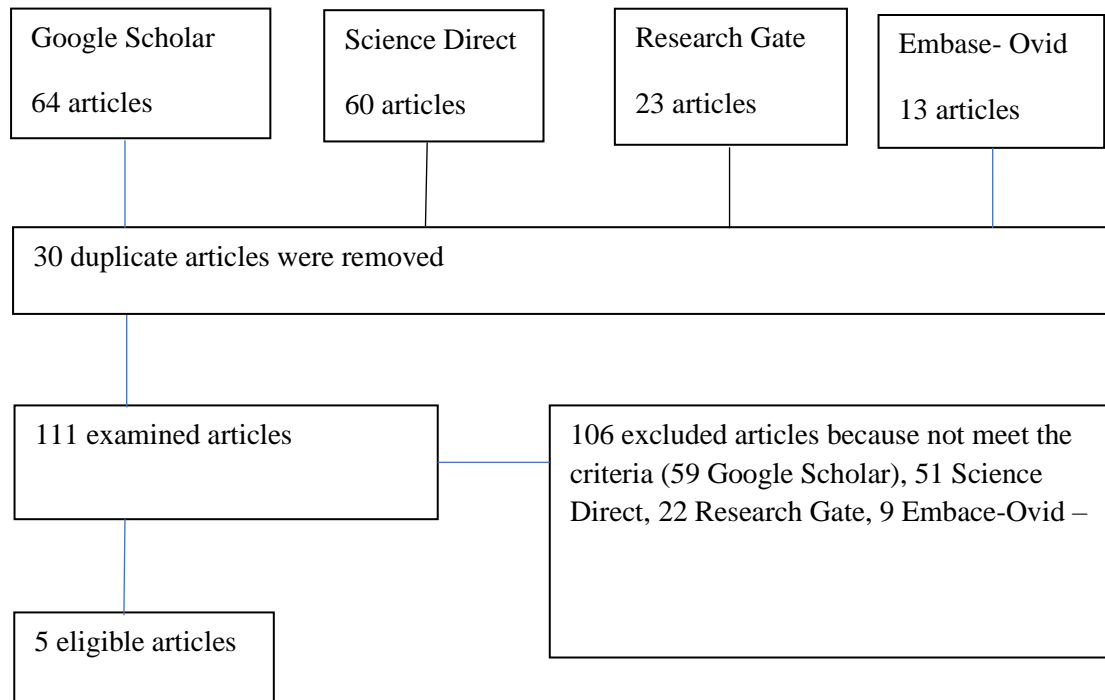


Table 1- Literature Summary

Bil.	Author /year	Keywords	Results
1	Ismail & Noor (2016)	Academic staff, lecturer, occupational stress, job stress, teaching	Occupational stress showed positive linear relationship to career development, research and teaching.
2	Yusuf & Khan (2013)	Stress, burnout, higher education	Teacher and administrator should know about job stress, burnout, stressor and coping mechanism.
3	Xiaoli Sang, Teo, Cooper, & Bohle (2013)	Occupational stress, employee health and wellbeing, higher education	Job stressor predicted job satisfaction and resulted in poorer psychological wellbeing.
4	Shikierie & Musa (2012)	Occupational stress, Higher education, organizational performance	On average the employee experienced high degree of job stress. Job stressor affected the general physical health of employee

5	Olatunji & Bernard (2012)	Stress, lecturers, stress experience	Male and female lecturers experience stress as result of workload.
---	---------------------------	--------------------------------------	--

### 2.3 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion and exclusion criteria have been utilized to make the first screening of the document. For inclusion in the subset of studies had to publisher in English, and address “occupational stress” among academician as the main goal. The use term “academician” restricted to the title during the search procedure and were justified to teachers, educators, teaching staff and lecturers. The primary study that must represent academics or educators. The primary studies also are in private university, university college or higher education. For exclusion in the subset of studies for data extraction, the screened studies were focus on the articles were excluded mainly because the study present unsuitability in the proposed outcome, the study population more on healthcare workers. Articles with incomplete information or with full text not available were also excluded. Narrative reviews, books or chapter, abstract and editorials were excluded. This process resulted in 5 studies that were suitable for the review.

### 3. Result and Discussion

The paper analyzed journal papers with SLR methods and came the following findings:

Ismail & Noor. (2016) analyzed 380 academic staffs regarding occupational stress and job factor. The prevalence of stress among academic staff was 22.1%. It found four major factors for job stress as physical, environment risk, psychological and occupational stress showed positive linear relationship to career development, research and teaching. This studies found that the career development was the major source of stress.

Yusuf & Khan. (2013) reviewed stress and burnout in higher education sector. The paper conducted a systematic literature review including paper from 8 journals and 6 books in 4 electronic databases. It concludes that teachers and administration should know about job stress, burnout, stressor and coping mechanisms and produce policies for making the working environment congenial.

Xiaoli Sang, Teo, Cooper, & Bohle, (2013) studied 150 academic in a Chinese higher education institute regarding the effect of work stress on wellbeing. The result shows job stressor predicted job satisfaction and resulted in poorer psychological wellbeing. Greater psychological wellbeing was associated with greater physical wellbeing.

Shikierie & Musa (2012) explored 150 of male and female employee from various educational level in a Sudanese University. The result indicated that on average the employee experienced high degree of job stress and job stressor such as lack of participation in decision making, were considered high degree job stress affecting most of the employee at private university with mean score of 2.32%. Furthermore, the workload also making a high degree job stress, 75.3 % employees complained from workload with an overall mean score 2.29, thus making workload a high degree job stress. Finally, working conditions degree stress with a mean score of 1.9 and 55.5% were suffering from this stressor. Result also indicated that job stressor affected the general physical health of employee.

Olantuji & Bernard (2012) studied on 100 University lecturers regarding on stress experience. It reveals that male and female lecturers experience stress as result of workload. There are indications also that male and female lectures are susceptible to stress as shown as large workload, large classes, marking of scripts and poor physical conditions.

The findings from Olantuji & Bernard (2012) revealed the gender role imposed on females which accrue to them additional roles seem to worsen situation. A lot of these women are seen and appear to be irritable while performing their role and are seen often to complain about tiredness while on the job. This result also can be support with study done by Narayanan et al found that interpersonal conflict played a greater role in causing job stress for women than for men. Organizational factors related to the administration of educational institutions ranked high as a substantial contributor to feelings of stress by educators at all levels of the academic system. The finding from the review indicates that job stress has a negative impact on employee wellbeing and attitudes to work in higher education sector, also provided the empirical evidence to indicate that there was a causal relationship from stressors to job dissatisfaction, which leads to a reduction in commitment and physical health.

Career development was the major source of stress among academic staff (Noor & Ismail, 2016). The most stressful indices arising from career development was the university conditions or provisions for professional development. Higher level of stress was reported arising from unrealistic expectations from the university. The next occupational stress in career development was having the required publication for promotion. The studies found that publication only was not associated with stress, but when publication combined with promotion, most respondent perceived stressful events in their career (Ahmady et al, 2007). The study also showed that stress increase aligned with heavier research (research was conceptualizing research problems, followed by linkage to other professionals in their research discipline) and teaching load. Ahsan et al, identified several stresses including factors in academic staff, that were work overload, role overload, role insufficiency and lack of research finance have been reported to strongly affect occupational stress among academic staff in universities (Tytherleigh et. al, 2005).

In respect to stress emanating from teaching, academic staff experienced stress mainly from development of course content, followed by collation of results, deciding on appropriate method of lesson presentation, marking the exam script and finally exam setting. Increased enrollment produced increase workload which may increase the probability of academician working under tight deadlines and needing more help (Wei, Hui, & Lie. 2011). The repeat courses or carry over courses of problematic students made result compilation hectic. These had increase the academic staff workload.

#### **4. Conclusions**

In summary, academic stress is a wide-spread phenomenon. Stress can come from the environment, or as a response to it. The findings indicated that the employees suffered high levels of job stress. The reported stressors were found to have positive and/or negative association with the physical health. The paper recommends that academic staff should know about stressors and their performance impact. This will enable them to take appropriate measures to minimize those stressors and also to design and redesign their jobs. Stress management workshop should be organized to develop good coping skill among academic staff and to increase their capability to manage stressful working situation in efficient ways.

Based on the findings suggest that private university management should have some proper interventions are required to minimize stress at work place. The university management should introduce strategies aimed at minimizing job stressors as these would result in higher level of job satisfaction, higher level of commitment and ultimately resulted in an improvement in physical health and wellbeing.

### Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thanks to the Islamic International University College and the RMC team for giving us the opportunity to conduct research under the GPIK grant.

### References

- Ahsan N, Abdullah Z, Alam SS. (2009). A study of job stress on job satisfaction among university staff in Malaysia: Empirical Study. *European Journal of Social Science*. 8: 121-131
- Amady S, Changiz T, Masielo I, Brommels M. (2007). Organizational role stress among medical school faculty in Iran: Dealing with role conflict. <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1472-6920/7/14> . accessed 13 May 2012.
- Brown, Z.A. & Uehara, D.L. (2008). Coping with teacher stress: A research synthesis for Pacific education. URL: <http://www.prel.org>
- Bridger, R.S., Kilminster, S., & Slaven, G. (2007). Occupational stress and strain in the naval service. (1999 and 2004). *Occupational Medicine*, 57: 92-97. doi 10.1093/ocemed/kql124.
- Dua, J.K., (1994). Job stressors and theirs effects on physical health, emotional health and job satisfaction in a university. *Journal of Education Administration*. 32: 59-78.
- Ferve, M, L., Matheny, J., & Kolt, G., S. (2003). Eustress, distress, and interpretation in occupational stress. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*. 18:726-744. doi: 10.1108/02683940310502412.
- Herbert, J. (1997). Fortnightly review: Stress, the brain, and mental illness. *BMJ*, 315.530-535. Doi:10.1136/bmj.315.7107.530.
- Larson, L.L. (2004). Internal auditors and job stress. *Managerial Auditing Journal*. 19:1119-1130
- Narayanan, L, Menons S & Spector P (1999) ; A cross cultural companion of job stress and reactions among employees holding comparable jobs in two countries. *International Journal of Stress Management*. 6: 197-212.
- Nwadiani, M. (2006). Level of perceived stress among lectures in Nigerian universities. *Journal of Insrutional Psychology*. URL; <http://www.the.freelibrary.com/>.
- Noor, A.& Ismail, N., H. (2016). Occupational Stress and its Associated factors among Academician in a Research University, Malaysia. *Malaysian Journal of Public Health Medicine*. Vol. 16(1): 81-91
- Olatunji, F.& BADA. (2012). Gender Influence on the Stress Experience of university lectures. *Journal of Business and Social Sciences*. Vol 1(4):56-62.

- Reskin, A (2008). Podcast transcript for working with stress s. URL:  
<http://online.sagepub.com/>
- Rowley, J. (1996). Motivation and academic and occupational stress in higher education. *Quality Assurance in Education*.4, 11-16. Doi:10.1108/09684896101281
- Sackey, J. & Sanda, M.A. (2009). Influence of Occupational Stress on Mental OF Ghanaian Professional Women. *Int. J. Ind. Ergon*, 39,867-887.
- Sarafino, EP, Ewing, M. (1999). The hassles assessment scale for students in college: Measuring the frequency and unpleasantness of dwelling on stressful events. *Journal of American College Health*. 48: 75-83.
- Tyherleigh, MY.,Webb, C., Cooper, C.,L. (2005). Occupational stress in UK higher education Institutions: A comparative study of all categories. *Journal of Higher Education Research & Development*. 24: 41-61.
- Wei, S., Hui, Lie, W. (2011). Occupational stress and its related factors among university teachers in China. *Journal of Occupational Health*. 53:280-286.
- Xiaoli Sang, Stephen T.T. Teo, Caryl. Cooper., Philip Bole. (2013). Modelling Occupational Stress and Employee Health and Wellbeing in a Chinese Higher Education Institution. *Higher Education Quarterly*. Doi 10,1111/j-1468-2273-2012.00529. x. 67 (1): 15-39.