

The Associations between Work Stress, Leadership Behaviors and Job Performance among Workers in Three Types of Occupations in Malaysia

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Abstract

The objectives of this study were to identify the differences in work stress, leadership behaviors (consideration and initiating structure) and job performance based on demographic information; and investigate the association between work stress, leadership behaviors and job performance after controlling other variables (demographic information). Data from 200 workers from three types of occupations in Malaysia (promoter, cleaner and factory workers) was collected. Participants were given a questionnaire consisting of six demographic information: Job Stress Scale, Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire, and Job Performance Scale. The findings revealed that female workers experience higher work stress and job performance, workplace stress and job performance are higher in different age groups (40-49 years old), the leaders were rated as being more thoughtful (consideration behavior) (30-39 years old) and initiating structure (50-59 years old). Furthermore, workers with three to four years of experience evaluated themselves as more stressed and having high job performance, but workers with less than two years of experience regarded their bosses as having more considerate behavior and initiating structure. Moreover, after controlling the demographic information, it was discovered that work stress was negatively related to job performance, whereas consideration behavior was positively associated. Lastly, the findings are discussed along with the limitations, implications and recommendations for future research.

Keywords: Work Stress, Consideration Behavior, Initiating Structure, Job Performance

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines stress in the workplace as a response shown by employees when work demands, and stress are not in line with the employee's abilities and knowledge. Essentially, stress responds to an individual's mental and physical to a stressful situation (Antai-Otong, 2001). Work stress is discomfort that one experiences or may

see, and it is triggered by events or situations that are too tense to exceed one's ability to cope and deal with them (Malta, 2004). Employees who experience work stress will express dissatisfaction, job mobility, decreased job performance, burnout, and lack of interpersonal relationship in the workplace (Manshor et al., 2003). Meanwhile, Irene (2005) argued that stress is a form of reaction shown by workers related to job demands that are not in line with their knowledge, skills and abilities, and they need to challenge themselves to cope with the situation. In addition, occupational stress is directly linked to new phenomena of modern living, in which the work environment is experiencing significant changes and the changes are occurring rapidly (Beheshtifar & Nazarin, 2013). Moreover, they also stated that work stress occurs more frequently in subordinates who have less power to control the work situation. Work stress has a significant impact on employee health and negatively impacts the organization (Mimura & Griffith, 2003).

Substantial studies have revealed that work stress has a negative association with job performance (Ajayi, 2018; Kazmi, Amjad & Khan, 2008; Paramitadewi, 2017). This finding suggests that those who undergo high work stress will have poor job performance, while those who experience low or minimum work stress will show a good and high level of job performance. However, some studies have identified a positive relationship between work stress and job performance (Asamoah-Appiah & Aggrey-Fynn, 2017; Harini et al., 2018). This finding indicates that workers with low work stress levels also demonstrated low job performance and vice versa. Similarly, according to the Flow Model, a workload that is too heavy can affect the work performance of employees, while a workload that is too light will cause employees to be unable to develop the potential they have (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). Hence, it is important for employees to have the right amount of workload so it can lead to eustress rather than distress.

Job stress among customer services has also indicated that this variable is negatively associated with two aspects of job performance: customer-directed extra-role performance and in-role performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Netemeyer et al., 2005). Not only that, Netemeyer et al (2005) added that job stress has a positive relationship with work-family conflict and family-work conflict. The relationship between work stress and job performance can be seen among seafarers (An, Liu, Sun & Liu, 2020), microelectronics engineers (Chen et al., 2011) and teachers (Riyadhi, 2015). Riyadhi (2015) demonstrated that one of the essential predictors that might lower job performance is job stress. This factor needs to be managed well because it can lead to other issues like counterproductive work behavior and cause a lower work contribution (Ghafar & Mohamed, 2016).

In addition, Chen et al (2011) revealed that when job stress was assessed using the Job Content Questionnaire (Karasek et al., 1998), employees who experience high demands, low work social support, and high effort, along with low frequency of physical exercise have a higher tendency to experience depressive disorders, which is associated with impaired work performance. Chen et al (2011) defined poor job performance as individuals who are frequently absent and have role and social functioning limitations, and the link between depressive illnesses and poor work performance was consistent with previous research (Kessler et al., 2008; Lerner & Henke, 2008). Furthermore, work stress, in combination with depression, not only has a huge impact on work performance but also make employees, particularly military personnel, experience more days of missed work (absence), poorer physical health, and have negative perceptions regarding the abilities of supervisors and commanders (Pflanz & Ogle, 2006).

Studies on work stress were also widely conducted among nurses, as this occupation is one of the professions faced with great work stress, as it involves the lives of other individuals. Past studies have reported that workplace stress has a negative association with job performance (Abu Al-Rub & Al-Zaru, 2008; Arbabisarjou et al., 2013; Farquharson, Allan et al., 2012; Li et al., 2017). Nurses who experience extra work role, are high in demand, and have a lot of control and change, tend to underperform, while those who have high support and good relationship in the workplace tend to be better in their jobs (Arbabisarjou et al., 2013). In addition, stress among nurses is associated with their well-being, such as reduced functional status, physical illness and reduced job satisfaction, and with regards to their patients care, the patients experience a lower level of satisfaction and poorer quality of care, along with increased likelihood of errors among nurses (Farquharson et al., 2012).

With consideration of other variables that might moderate the link between work stress and job performance, Siu (2003) revealed that work values have a moderating effect when employees experience low or moderately high work stress. Work values are strongly associated with certain cultures. For example, the Confucian culture values hard work, endurance, and loyalty, thus leading employees to become more eager to do well and be competent in their job. Moreover, coping strategies moderated the relationship between work stress and job performance when nurses were chosen as the sample (Li et al., 2017). Li et al (2017) suggested that positive coping strategies (looking for support from family or friends, utilizing others' ways of dealing with similar problems) moderated one of the work stress subscales, called patient care on job performance. Meanwhile, negative coping strategies (procrastinating, relying on others, trying to forget everything) moderated job performance with two subscales: workload and time, and working environment and resources.

Apart from work stress, which shows an impact on an individual's job performance, leadership styles are also important factors that play roles in determining employee performance. Miller et al (2002) stated that leadership style is how superiors interact with their subordinates, including the way superiors give instructions and the way superiors motivate subordinates to achieve goals. Moreover, path-goal theory (House & Dressler, 1974) suggests that an employee's leadership style can influence the behavior of his subordinates. Meanwhile, Griffin and Moorhead (2012) explained that subordinates are motivated by their leaders, and their leader's behaviors affect the subordinates' expectations. In other words, the behaviors performed by the leaders will influence subordinates' work performance and will encourage them to achieve the desired reward, which is in line with the path-goal theory (Griffin & Moorhead, 2012).

Some well-known leadership models such as The Situational Leader Model (The SLM) (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969) state that there are two-dimensional spaces and each of those dimensions contains two leadership styles. The task behavior axis is the first dimension, with high levels of task and low levels of relationship and high levels of task and high levels of relationship as leadership styles. The axis of relational behavior is the second dimension. The first leadership style is low task level and high relationship level, whereas the second is low task level and low relationship level. Bass and Bass (2008) stated that this model focuses on follower readiness, meaning that a follower has the ability and willingness to complete a task. Situational leadership requires leaders to adapt to task giving behaviors (giving instructions and mentoring) and relational behaviors (giving social encouragement), depending on the employees' willingness to perform the task.

Another well-recognized leadership model is by Bass and Bass (1985), which describe transactional leadership style as leaders who explain the tasks that need to be done by employees and give rewards and penalties depending on employee performance. On the other hand, the transformational leadership style describes the ways used by leaders to bring about a change in the team or organization by creating effective communication or motivation to its employees (Bass & Bass, 1985).

Quality in leadership includes interacting versus hierarchy levels, group problem solving, conversation versus giving instructions, sharing values and beliefs, honesty, and a desire to bring good things together (Gill et al., 2006). In addition, Gill (2006) added that an important aspect related to leadership style from the point of view of human service is the development of evidence-based practices, which involves evaluating theories, models and practices and training on leadership style. In addition, according to Champoux (2011), Fielder's Theory argues that a leader has a certain set of leader characteristics, such as being task-oriented or relationship-oriented. A task-oriented leader is directed, structured, sets deadlines and creates tasks, while a relationship-oriented leader is less directional, focused on employees and desires positive social interaction. Additionally, Iqbal, Anwar and Haider (2015) also supported that this theory is associated with effective employee performance depending on the leader's ability to lead situations that require the leader's ability.

Research has demonstrated that leadership style in an organization can affect all parties in the organization, including superiors, employees, and even new employees. It creates a corporate culture that will influence performance and the organization (Iqbal et al., 2015). For certain types of work, like promoter, leadership styles of the superior play an important role in influencing their subordinates to succeed in promoting and selling activities (Ingram et al., 2005). Leadership style is like arts that can influence subordinates to work harder to achieve the set goals (Igbaekemen, 2014). It helps create a vibrant organizational atmosphere and a cultured organization (Alghazo & Al-Anazi, 2016).

Superior leadership style has been studied for a long time, and various leadership construct have been developed. Among the constructs are transformational, transactional, laissez-faire, leader-member exchange and consideration leadership and initiating structure constructs. However, a study conducted by Rowold, Borgmann & Bormann (2014) revealed that initiating structure was among the most dominant leadership than other constructs. Specifically, initiating structure was the most dominant for explaining variance in affective commitment and perceived job performance in for-profit and nonprofit organizations. This shows that controlling followers, providing feedback, and facilitating followers' work definitely help the followers understand their current work priorities (Rowold et al., 2014).

Looking back at the earliest research on the impact of consideration and initiating structure on job performance, it was discovered that workers at large manufacturing plants who rated their supervisors highly in consideration had higher quality, as measured by the amount of scrap, rework, and errors kept to a minimum (Cummins, 1971). Besides, O'Reilly and Roberts (1978) suggested that supervisors who increased their initiating structure had relations with subordinates' positive attitudes and performance under certain conditions, such as when subordinates have high mobility aspirations (e.g., How important is it for you to progress upward in your present organization?). They explained that high initiating structure has a positive impact when it acts to clarify the path to desired outcomes (mobility aspiration), and it brings a negative effect when it does not contribute to the subordinates' accomplishment of desired goals. This statement is in line with (House, 1971).

Furthermore, Keller (2006) discovered that when objective measures were used to assess performance, such as product profitability five years later and its relationship with consideration and initiating structure, initiating structure predicted this outcome. Leaders who provide subordinates with details and clear directions in carrying out their work perform better than other leaders who did not give specific instructions (Keller, 2006). On the other hand, consideration behavior shown by leaders has a positive correlation with organizational return on assets (Hartnell et al., 2016). However, this result was inconsistent with (Basker et al., 2020). They found that return on assets was positively correlated with initiating structure and did not significantly correlate with consideration behavior. They suggested that initiating structure might help employees focus on billed to a customer activity, which can increase firm profitability and increase firm's efficiency. Initiating structure provides significant benefits due to the stable environment and well-defined tasks (Basker et al., 2020).

Furthermore, initiating structure is positively associated with objective and subjective measures (subjective judgement by superior) among managers, as assessed by financial, quantitative performance metrics, and performance targets for managerial performance evaluation (Hartmann et al., 2010). They added that initiating structure leaders anticipate more on objective performance because it is easier for them to make the path to achieve this target clearer by enhancing the structure of the job performance.

A meta-analysis conducted by Judge et al (2004) revealed that consideration and initiating structure positively impact certain outcomes. Consideration was strongly associated with outcomes related to follower satisfaction, such as leader and job satisfaction, leader effectiveness and follower motivation while initiating structure was slightly stronger than consideration in terms of leader job performance and group-organization performance (Judge et al., 2004). They concluded that even though followers prefer considerate leaders, but they will perform more effectively under initiating structure leaders (Judge et al., 2004).

In a nutshell, previous research has demonstrated that employees who are under a lot of stress at work have a negative influence on their job performance, and this is undeniable. Managing one's work stress is crucial because it does not only benefit the individual, but also the organization. Not only that, consideration and initiating structure among leaders also influence the job performance of the subordinates. Hence, this study aims to examine the association between work stress, consideration, initiating structure and job performance after controlling other factors (age, gender, educational background, monthly income, length of services and type of occupation – cleaner, promoter and factory workers).

Methodology

Sample and Data Collection

This research involved a quantitative method with a cross-sectional design. The questionnaires measured work stress, consideration and initiating structure, and job performance among workers in three types of occupations (cleaners, promoters, and factory workers). A total of 200 workers completed the survey. Participant recruitment involved purposive sampling. The main inclusion criterion was that participants must be employed full-time, no more than 59 years old, and working either as cleaner, promoter or factory worker. Among the respondents, 70 works as cleaners, 70 as factory workers, and 60 as promoters.

The majority of the respondents were male (112, 56%), age between 20 to 29 years old (82, 41%), finished secondary school (156, 78%), monthly income between one to two thousand Ringgit Malaysia (182, 91%), and have been working for more than five years (86, 43%).

Table 1

Frequencies of demographic information

Demographic information	Total	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	112	56
Female	88	44
Age		
Below 20	0	0
20 to 29	82	41
30 to 39	30	15
40 to 49	29	14.5
50 to 59	59	29.5
Education background		
No formal education	14	7
Primary school	17	8.5
Secondary school	156	78
Tertiary education	13	6.5
Monthly income		
RM 1000 to RM 2000	182	91
RM 2001 to RM 3000	18	9
RM 3000 and above	0	0
Length of services		
Below two years	70	35
Three to four years	44	22
More than five years	86	43
Type of occupation		
Cleaner	70	35
Promoter	60	30
Factory worker	70	35

Measurements

This research has four sections that include (A) demographic information, (B) work stress, (C) leadership style and (D) job performance. The participants needed to fill up answers regarding their demographic information: gender, age, academic background, salary and length of service with the current job.

Meanwhile, the occupational stress scale (Cullen, Link, Wolfe, & Frank, 1985) was employed to assess work stress. This scale has six items that measure stress at work, and all the items had a response scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Only item number four required reversing the scoring. The examples of the item are "When I am at work, I often feel tense or uptight" and "There are many aspects of my job that make me upset." The reliability of this instrument is 0.907 Cronbach's Alpha.

Furthermore, the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire by Hemphill and Coon (1957) was used for leadership behaviors. There were 13 items measured with a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). This measurement has two dimensions: consideration and initiating structure. The examples of the item are "When faced with a problem, he/she consults with subordinates" and "He/she explains the ways tasks should be carried out." The reliability of this instrument is 0.908 Cronbach's Alpha.

Finally, job performance was measured using Williams and Anderson's (1991) seven-item in-role performance scale, which included a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) (strongly disagree). Items six and seven were reverse coded. The examples of the items are "Fulfill responsibilities specified in the job description" and "Neglect aspects of the job I obliged to perform". The reliability of this instrument is 0.720 Cronbach's Alpha.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using IBM SPSS 25 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Independent sample t-test, one-way ANOVA (Analysis of variance) and post-hoc Hochberg's GT2 test were used to examine the differences of the variables according to demographic factors. In addition, Pearson correlation coefficients were used to investigate the relationship between all variables. Lastly, hierarchical regression was employed to examine the associations between work stress, leadership behavior and job performance, after controlling other variables.

Findings and Results

This study has two objectives, (1) to examine the differences in work stress, leadership styles and job performance according to demographic information; and (2) to investigate the associations between work stress, leadership behavior and job performance after controlling demographic information.

The independent sample t-test, one-way ANOVA, and post-hoc were used to investigate differences in work stress, supervisor leadership styles, and job performance based on gender, age group, educational background, salary, length of service, and type of occupation. Independent sample t-test revealed that there is significant difference in work stress among male and female workers, $t(198) = 8.34, p = .000$, with female workers experiencing higher work stress ($M = 19.24, SD = 5.28$) than male workers ($M = 13.99, SD = 2.98$). Significant differences can also be seen between male and female workers with regard to job performance, $t(198) = -3.20, p = .002$, with female workers having higher job performance ($M = 31.95, SD = 2.97$) than male workers ($M = 30.78, SD = 1.98$). On the contrary, there are no significant differences between gender and the supervisors' initiating structure and consideration behavior, $t(198) = -.542, p = .589$, and $t(198) = -.865, p = .372$, respectively.

Next, one-way ANOVA revealed that all the variables were significantly different according to the age groups, with $F(3, 196) = 101.95, p = .000$ (work stress), $F(3, 196) = 20.95, p = .000$ (consideration behavior), $F(3, 196) = 10.520, p = .000$ (initiating structure), and $F(3, 196) = 105.57, p = .000$ (job performance). Due to the unequal sample size for each age group, post-hoc analyses were done, and Hochberg's GT2 was used to examine further which age groups were different. The result demonstrated that employees belonging to the age group of 40 to 49 years old show the highest mean of work stress ($M = 23.97, SD = 0.19$) than other age groups. In addition, those in 30 to 39 years old age group evaluated their supervisors as more considerate ($M = 37.83, SD = 4.37$) than other age groups. Meanwhile, those who are in 50 to 59 years old age group evaluated their supervisors as more initiating ($M = 21.63, SD = 4.33$) than other age groups. Lastly, those in the age range of 40 to 49 had the best performance at work ($M = 35.00, SD = 0.54$) compared to other groups ($M = 35.00, SD = 0.54$).

In the case of educational background, one-way ANOVA was used again, and the results revealed significant differences in work stress and job performance based on educational background, $F(3, 196) = 2.81, p = .041$ and $F(3, 196) = 3.03, p = .030$, respectively. However,

when post-hoc Hochberg's GT2 was conducted, significant differences in job performance can be seen only between employees who completed primary school ($M = 32.76$, $SD = 2.70$), and tertiary education ($M = 30.31$, $SD = 2.87$). After conducting the post-hoc test, none of the educational background groups was significantly different on work stress.

With regards to salary, one-way ANOVA demonstrated that none of the salary groups show any significant difference on work stress, initiating structure and consideration behavior, and job performance, with $F(1, 198) = 1.40$, $p = .238$ (work stress), $F(1, 198) = .512$, $p = .475$ (consideration behavior), $F(1, 198) = 2.97$, $p = .086$ (initiating structure) and $F(1, 198) = 1.97$, $p = .162$ (job performance).

Next, one-way ANOVA showed that all variables were significantly different according to length of services, with $F(2, 197) = 62.72$, $p = .000$ (work stress), $F(2, 197) = 70.99$, $p = .000$ (consideration behavior), $F(2, 197) = 92.44$, $p = .000$ (initiating structure), and $F(2, 197) = 62.89$, $p = .000$ (job performance). Moreover, post-hoc Hochberg's GT2 demonstrated that employees who have between three and four years of experience have higher work stress ($M = 19.58$, $SD = 3.15$), than those who have been working less than two years ($M = 12.38$, $SD = 3.19$) and more than five years ($M = 17.96$, $SD = 3.15$). Meanwhile workers in below two years of experience group, evaluated their supervisors as more considerate ($M = 37.32$, $SD = 11.59$), and initiating ($M = 23.44$, $SD = 4.57$) compared to other groups. In addition, those who have three and four years of working experience have higher job performance ($M = 34.14$, $SD = 1.36$) than other groups.

For type of occupations, one-way ANOVA revealed that none of the occupational type, which consists of cleaners, promoters and factory workers have any significant difference on work stress [$F(2, 197) = .041$, $p = .960$], consideration behavior [$F(2, 197) = .008$, $p = .992$], initiating structure [$F(2, 197) = .430$, $p = .651$], and job performance [$F(2, 197) = .001$, $p = .999$].

The next research objective was to investigate the associations between work stress, leadership styles, and job performance, after controlling the demographic information. The correlation analysis was conducted first, followed by hierarchical regression analysis. The correlation analysis showed that work stress is negatively correlated with job performance, $r(198) = .678$, $p = .000$. Meanwhile supervisors with consideration behavior and initiating structure have positive relationships with employee job performance, $r(198) = .817$, $p = .000$, and $r(198) = -.682$, $p = .000$, respectively.

Table 2

Correlation analysis between work stress, leadership styles and job performance

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Work stress (1)	1			
Considerate leadership (2)	-.452**	1		
Initiating structure leadership style (3)	-.698**	.698	1	
Job performance (4)	-.678**	.817**	.682**	1

Next, Table 3 illustrates the hierarchical regression analysis, where the demographic information (gender, age, educational background, salary, length of services and type of education) (Model I) were regarded as the control variables, and job performance as the dependent variable, along with work stress, consideration and initiating leadership styles (Model II) as the input. Model I, with six demographic variables as predictors, significantly explained variance in job performance $F(6, 193) = 4.706$, $p = .000$, and this model explained

12.8% of the variance in job performance (adjusted $R^2 = .101$) in Table 3, where job performance is the dependent variable. Model II, in which work stress, supervisors' consideration behavior and initiating structure were added, explained more variance significantly (R^2 change = .737, $F(3, 190) = 346.329$, $p = .000$). This model explained 86.5% of the variance in job performance (adjusted $R^2 = .859$) and was significant ($F(9, 190) = 135.422$, $p = .000$). The significant predictors for job performance are age, length of services, work stress and consideration behavior. In a nutshell, this analysis shows that work stress is negatively associated with job performance, while consideration behavior of the leaders is positively associated with job performance after controlling the demographic information.

Table 3

Hierarchical multiple regression for well-being

Dependent variable Independent variable	Job Performance					
	Model I			Model II		
Control variable	β	t	p	β	t	p
Gender	-.271	-3.889	.000	.022	.442	.659
Age	-.006	-.075	.940	-.277	-6.077	.000*
Education	-.126	-1.816	.071	-.051	-1.840	.067
Salary	-.084	-1.204	.230	.005	.191	.849
Length of services	.195	2.573	.011*	-.295	-6.868	.000*
Type of occupation	.003	.050	.960	-.008	-.305	.761
Predictors						
Work stress				-.434	-6.556	.000*
Considerate				.800	14.092	.000*
Initiating structure				-.067	-1.021	.309
R^2		.128			.865	
ΔR^2		.128			.737	
F change		1.706			346.329	
Sig. F change		.000			.000	

Discussion

This study has two main objectives. The first is to examine the differences of work stress, consideration behavior and initiating structure leadership style, and job performance according to demographic information (gender, age, educational background, salary, length of services and type of occupation). Meanwhile, the second objective is to investigate the association between work stress, consideration and initiating structure, and job performance after controlling other variables (demographic information).

For the first objective, the study demonstrated that work stress, consideration behavior and initiating structure, and job performance show significant differences according to demographic information. It was found that female workers experience higher work stress and job performance than male workers. In addition, certain age groups significantly show differences with regard to the variables. For example, workers in the age group of 40 to 49 years old have the highest work stress and job performance. Meanwhile, those who belong to the age group of 30 to 39 years old rated their supervisor as more considerate whereas those in the 50 to 59 years old group rated their supervisor as having more initiating structure. Moreover, only those who finished primary school showed significant differences in terms of job performance than those who finished tertiary education. Lastly, workers with 3 to 4 years

of work experience demonstrated the highest work stress and job performance compared to others. Workers with less than two years of experience rated their supervisor as more considerate and initiating structure.

These findings suggest that workers from various demographic backgrounds experience varying levels of work stress, consideration behavior and initiating structure leadership styles, and job performance. These findings are in line with those of previous research. For example, it was demonstrated that female teachers experienced more work stress than male teachers (Arroba & James, 2002; Shailaja & Sunagar, 2012). On the contrary, there were also studies that found that male teachers have higher work stress than female teachers (Aftab & Khatoon, 2012; Olonade & Famolu, 2020). Moreover, Aftab & Khatoon (2012) revealed that trained graduate teachers have higher job stress than post-graduate teachers, and those who served 6 to 10 years also experienced higher job stress than those who served less than five years. Similarly, certain age groups perceived stress at work differently (Hadi et al., 2009). For example, those between the ages of 31 and 40 had a high degree of job stress (Noor Suhaida, 2002), and younger employees have more occupational stress than older workers (Hadi, et al., 2009). Meanwhile, according to the findings of this study, female employees in all three categories of occupations do better than male workers. The performance differences between male and female employees are consistent with a meta-analysis research done by Roth et al (2012), which found that females scored slightly higher than males. However, they added that even though job performance showed favorability towards the female, the promotion potential rating was higher among males. According to the expectation states theory, women are kinder, more patient, more artistic and literary, and more understanding than men, whereas men are more scientific, mechanical, and assertive (Berger, Rosenholtz & Zelitch, 1980). As a result, females are perceived as more favorable and pleasing, and so are evaluated as having higher job performance in certain situations (e.g., using field studies to collect the data) (Roth et al., 2012).

Furthermore, the present study found that people with various educational backgrounds, particularly those with lower education, had better job performance than those with higher education, although this contradicts Ishola, Adeleye, and Tanimola's (2018) findings. They demonstrated that those with higher educational backgrounds reported more job performance than others with lower education. The inconsistency might be due to the job nature or the type of the job itself, where the current study focuses on promoters, cleaners, and factory workers, while Ishola et al. (2018) selected financial accounting staff as their sample. Moreover, it was stated that employees with more experience on the job showed better job performance (He et al., 2015), and this finding is in line with the current study. Workers' task knowledge and experience are believed to improve with experience, and they are better at recalling appropriate procedures and making decisions, resulting in increased performance (He et al., 2015).

Next, for leadership behavior, the result demonstrated that workers between 30 to 39 years old rated their supervisor as having high consideration and those aged between 50 to 59 years old assessed their supervisor as having high initiating structure. In addition, workers with less than two years of working experience rated their supervisor as having more consideration and high in initiating structure. These results indicate that workers who belong to a certain age group and a certain period of working experience assessed their leaders' behavior as having more consideration or initiating structure. According to the literature, the differences or the association of age and length of services on leadership behavior were inconclusive. For example, Rowold (2011); Lok and Crawford (2003) reported that age did not

significantly affect consideration behavior or initiating structure. Meanwhile, the latest study conducted by Basker, Sverdrup, Schei and Sandvik (2020) revealed that age was positively correlated with initiating structure but was not significantly related to the consideration behavior of the leader. In addition, employee's tenure was negatively correlated with consideration behavior and positively associated with initiating structure (Lok & Crawford, 2003). These inconclusive results indicate that more study is needed to address age groups' effect and the length of services on leadership behavior.

For the second objective, the result from this study is in line with various past research, which demonstrated that work stress is negatively associated with job performance (An et al., 2020; Foy et al., 2018; Li et al., 2017; Netemeyer et al., 2005; Riyadi, 2015), after controlling demographic information. This finding revealed that workers who experience high stress at work also show low job performance. Factors like unrealistic demands, lack of resources, and constraints on workers will lead to a stressful workplace and negatively impact their performance (Sinha & Subramaniam, 2012). In addition, continuous exposure to work stress can make the workers have less interest in work activities and initiatives. As a consequence, it can impact physical health and increase psychological symptoms of distress (Spurgeon, Mazelan & Barwel, 2012). However, some studies contradicted the current findings, for example, research conducted by (Leung et al., 2011; Dominguez, 2013). Their findings revealed that work stress is positively associated with job performance, on the basis that workers sometimes work better under pressure. With appropriate and enough stress and pressure, individuals can be more focused, give extra attention, but not to the point where it interferes with their performance (Dominguez, 2013; Huang et al., 2011). Moreover, stress at the workplace need to be well managed as it affects job performance and contributes to various counterproductive work behavior Riana (2015) and leads to decreased employees' work contribution (Ghafar & Mohamed, 2016).

Lastly, the current study demonstrated that considerate behavior of the leaders is significantly associated with the workers' job performance, and this finding is consistent with other studies (e.g., Blickle, Schutte & Genau, 2018; Judge et al., 2004; Rowold et al., 2014). This indicates that leaders who demonstrated behavior that reflects friendship, mutual trust, respect, and warmth in their relationship with subordinates (Hemphill & Coons, 1957) lead to increased performance of the work among workers. Rowold (2010) added that subordinate or team members of heterogenous work teams (e.g., age, gender, culture) appreciate considerate behavior from their leader. This behavior uses one-on-one guidance to achieve work-related goals and high performance. In addition, the quality of performance shown by the workers depends on workers motivation, and this work motivation might be influenced by considerate leader-member interaction (Cummins, 1971). Moreover, considerate behavior helps the organization or firm adapt to changes when the employees are emotionally attached to the organization, where this type of leadership behavior affects subordinate job performance and their affective commitment (Basker et al., 2020). This shows that considerate behavior is one of the important elements in determining employees job performance.

The current study has a few limitations that worth to be mentioned. First, because this study utilized convenience and purposeful sampling, we chose three categories of Malaysian occupations: promoters, cleaners, and factory workers. As a result, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to other populations. In reality, it cannot be applied to this specific type of occupation since the sampling technique did not adequately represent the three types of occupations. Second, due to the unequal sample size, the differences of each variable based

on demographic information might be inaccurate and derived from chances. Third, due to the small sample size for each type of occupation, it limits our data analysis, especially in conducting hierarchical regression for each occupation and compare the result between groups. Lastly, as we chose these types of occupations, where most of them are low-income workers, and only have a secondary educational background, we received some feedback from the participants stating that some of the words and statements of the questionnaire are hard to understand. Hence this issue might affect the findings.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Studies

In conclusion, the current study demonstrated differences in work stress, consideration behavior and initiating structure of the leaders, and job performance based on certain demographic information. In addition, the result also indicated that work stress is negatively associated with job performance. In contrast, consideration behavior of the leaders is positively associated with job performance after controlling the demographic information. The result is important as it is beneficial not only to the existing knowledge but also to the practitioners. Some limitations from this study were covered earlier. Hence a few recommendations for future research will be stated. First, it would be better if the future research can choose a more representative sample to the population and resolve the issue of unequal sample size, especially regarding demographic background. Second, recruit and collect more sample for each type of occupation so that the analyses process can be conducted with more confidence. Third, it would be better if the pilot study can be done among similar sample background. As stated earlier, due to the low educational background, some participants had difficulty understanding the questions. This study conducted a pilot test among university students, and this issue did not rise. Lastly, it might be worth exploring other types of occupations because different results might be derived from that. In a nutshell, factors like work stress and leadership behavior need to be altered as this might help increase and improve workers' job performance.

The result is important as it is beneficial not only to the existing knowledge but also to the practitioners. Despite some limitations, the study also brings some implications to both knowledge and practical fields. After controlling other factors, the study revealed that work stress was negatively related to job performance, and considerate leadership behavior was positively associated with job performance. Past research has shown that workers who experience high work stress will have lower job performance. The present study confirmed the previous findings, indicating that work stress has a detrimental impact on job performance regardless of the kind of occupation or setting. In addition, in this study, leadership behavioral type, especially consideration behavior is positively associated with job performance. The literature presented a mixed finding, with some studies revealing that initiating structure has a stronger relationship with workers' performance, while some research revealed that considerate behavior is more associated with job performance than initiating structure. Thus, this study supports those research which claimed that considerate behavior of the leader is positively and significantly associated with subordinate work performance. Second, the practitioners and management can use the result to develop and run intervention programmes for both workers and supervisors. Intervention programmes for workers can focus on dealing with work stress, and other training and development programmes for supervisors can focus on increasing their consideration behavior. By doing these, work stress among workers might decrease, and supervisors' consideration behavior can increase, thus facilitate a greater level of subordinates' job performance.

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