

## Social support and Religiosity as Coping Strategies for Reducing Job Stress

Aqeel Khan

Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling  
University of Malaya  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
Email: draqeelkhan@gmail.com

Meguellati Achour

Institute of Graduate Studies  
University of Malaya  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
Email: megue\_a2007@yahoo.fr

**Abstract**—The present study carried out on 70 Administrative staff of University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur with the aim to examine religiosity and social support as coping strategies and their influence on reducing job stress and employee' well-being in administrative staff of Malaysian learning institutions. The determinants of job stress included under this research are workload pressure, homework interface, and performance pressure. Researchers used a set of questionnaires to collect data. The results show that coping strategies positively related with social support and religiosity and negatively related with job strain. Finding also revealed that religiosity significantly related with social support and coping strategies negatively related with job strain.

### I. INTRODUCTION

During this time the stress at work is a phenomenon that might articulate itself in a different way, and affect employees differently, in different work circumstances. Study of job stress in different contexts will contribute to deeper and clear understanding of the phenomenon as a complete and how to reduce its negative effects on employees' satisfaction, productivity and commitment to continue in their jobs. A strong normative commitment to an organization, for case, may overrule some of negative effects of stress. Job stress in life is the most important parts of our daily routine which source a big deal of pressures. Due to the competitive nature of the job environment majorities of people in the world are spending too much time for job related to work purposes resulting overlook the stressor those are influencing their work and life. Basically most of people in the world are more worrying about their outcome of their job that can even affect the way they care for other people and how they converse with their peers and customers. For example, people with a higher percentage of occupational stress may not be satisfied with their job and therefore they will not feel happy working in the organization.

According to this introduction, there are many researchers are interested to study the methods of dealing with stress in a variety of environments and their relationship to some variables. Lazarus and folkman (1988) found social support, transition from subject, self-control and plans of problem-solving as coping strategies to deal with pressing conditions. Also some of researchers they said religiosity and self-efficacy had important roles in the prediction of satisfaction with work and life.

Individuals and organizations cannot remain in a continuous state of tension, if a deliberate and conscious

strategy is not adopted to deal with stress. Some strategies are adopted; e.g. to leave the conflicts and stress to take care of themselves. This is also a strategy although the individual or the organization may not be aware of this. This is called avoidance coping strategy.

Coping can have an effect on three kinds of outcome – (i) psychological, (ii) social, (iii) physiological. From a psychological perspective, coping can have an effect on the psychological morale e.g. the way one feels about oneself and one's life, emotional reaction e.g. level of depression or anxiety or the balance between positive trend and negative feelings, the incidence of psychiatric disorders and even performance.

Psychologists have identified two major ways in which people cope with experienced stress, this is called passive or avoidance approach. Another way the person may decide to face the realities of experienced stress and clarify the problem is through negotiation with other members. This is termed as active or functional approach. Although there are many ways to classify coping responses, most approaches distinguish between strategies that are active in nature and oriented toward confronting the problem and strategies that entail an effort to reduce tension by avoiding dealing with the problem. Studies show that a respite from chronic job stressors can bring relief from strain (Eden, 1990; Lounsbury & Hooper, 1986; Westman & Eden, 1997).

Another important ingredient is Social support can be defined as information that leads an individual to believe that he is cared for and loved, valued a member of a network of mutual obligation (Cobb, 1976). As Pierce et al (1990) pointed out that in addition to general perceptions of available social support; people also develop expectations about the availability of social support for their specific significant relationships. Social support may be an important component of college students' transitioning successfully to the college environment (Hays & Oxley, 1986) and low levels of social support being related to a lack of persistence in academic endeavors (Mallinckrodt, 1988).

Canty-Mitchell and Zimet (2000) argued that the Significant other subscale is a strong supplement to the family and the friends' subscales because it taps a different support source for the adolescent, such as boyfriend/girlfriend, teacher and counselor.

The purpose of present study was to examine religiosity and social support as coping strategies and their influence on reducing job stress and employee' well-being in administrative staff of Malaysian learning institutions.

## II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

- (a) To examine the determinants of social support.
- (b) To examine the relationship between the social support from family, friends and others with coping strategies and religiosity.
- (c) To determine the psychometric of the scale used.

### Method

#### Measure

*Perceived Social Support Scale*: 12 items Multidimensional scale for perceived social support developed by Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley, 1988 was used. The Cronbach alpha reported .92.

*Job Strain Questionnaire (JSQ)*: Job strain questionnaire was developed by Shailendra Singh (1989). It is a fourteen items questionnaire consisting of both positively and negatively keyed items. Out of the fourteen items, eleven items are "true keyed" and three items are "false keyed". Each item is rated in the following manner: (1) never, (2) rarely, (3) sometimes (4) rather often and (5) nearly all the time. It has three dimensions:

(a) Latent hostility: from one to five items are in the dimension of latent hostility.

(b) Depression: from six to eight items are in the second dimension.

(c) Physical strain: from nine to fourteen items of the questionnaire belong to the third dimension.

*Cope Scale*: Cope scale was developed by Carver, Scheier, & Wintraub (1989). The cope scale was used to assess the coping styles and strategies. The cope scale comprised of twenty four items sub representing the twelve categories namely: (1) Active coping (2) Planning (3) Use of emotional support (4) Positive reframing (5) Acceptance (6) religion (7) venting (8) Denial (9) Behavior disengagement (10) Self-distraction (11) Use of humour and (12) Alcohol. There were four alternative response categories where the subject was asked to indicate, 'what you usually do when you experience a stressful event.' Each item was rated as 1= I have not been doing this at all to 4= I have been doing this a lot. There were no straight away right or wrong choices but the following were there: "I usually do this at all", "I usually do this a little bit", "I usually do this a lot". From this scale coping strategies of the teachers were identified. Teachers were requested to report what coping strategies they use to cope with social and family role stress and job stress.

*Religiosity*: Participants completed the SCSORF (Plante & Boccaccini, 1997a), a 10-item self-report measure of "Strength of Religious Faith". Sample items include "My religious faith is extremely important to me" (item-1) and "My relationship with God is extremely important to me" (item-7). The scale uses a 4-point Likert response format, ranging from (1) "Strongly Disagree" to (4) "Strongly Agree." Scores can range between 10 and 40, with higher aggregate scores reflecting stronger levels of "Strength of Religious Faith."

*Procedure*: Prior to the administration of the tests the investigator had explained the purpose of the study to the

subjects. A rapport was developed during the process. The teachers were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and will be utilized only for the purpose of research. Each respondent was given a set of four questionnaires described above along with the personal data sheet.

*Data Analysis*: Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was used to analyze the data.

### Results and Discussion

Table 2 exhibits the correlation coefficients between all variables. Not all independent variables are correlated significantly. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Coping was found to be positively related with social support and religiosity, these variables are negatively related with job strain. The three dimensions of social support i.e., friend, family and significant other, plays important role to cope with stresses. Social support is an important resource that enables an individual to cope with stress and prevent burnout (Bonfiglio, 2005; Kim-wan, 1991; Russell, Altmaier & Velzen, 1987). It has been found that social support can buffer the negative effects of stress (e.g. Bonfiglio, 2005; Cheuk, Wong & Rose, 1994; Cutrona, 1990; Russell et al, 1987; Solomon, Waysman & Mikulincer, 1990; Wong & Cheuk, 2005). The person with high religiosity also observed to fight with stress in better way. This study also highlighted the importance of social support in reducing stress and strain although buffering effects of social support could not be found (Chan, 1987). The three stress measures (workload pressure, homework interface, and performance pressure) were found to be predictive of job strain in job dissatisfactions, while the strain variable bodily and affective complaints was predicted by work overload and needs deficiency.

The present study also indicated that social support had main effect on job strain. All kinds of social support were negatively and significantly correlated with job strain. Moreover, family, close friends and others such as managers are important supporters to staff to be predictive of job dissatisfactions.

The results in relation to the buffering effects of social support and religiosity indicated as coping strategies that social support and religiosity were effective in reducing adverse effects of job stress. Finding also revealed that religiosity significantly related with social support and coping strategies and negatively related with job strain. Religiosity plays important role in Malaysia to cope with stresses.

## III. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the results of this study, there are some recommendations are elevated for university authority and administrators staff.

Recommendation for university authority

- The university authority should try to have more interactions with staff as well as create more opportunities for communications among members of the staff.

Table 1: showing reliability of the measures used in the present study

Variables	Number of Items	Alpha ( $\alpha$ )
Coping Strategies	28	.797
Social Support	12	.747
Job Strain	14	.782
Religiosity	10	.895

Table 2: showing correlation among variables used in the present study

Correlations

		Coping	Social Support	Job Strain	Religiosity
Coping	Pearson Correlation	1	.370**	.505**	.086
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002	.000	.479
	NN	700	700	700	700
Social Support	Pearson Correlation	.370**	1	-.037	.497**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002		.758	.000
	N	70	70	70	70
Job Strain	Pearson Correlation	.505**	-.037	1	-.164
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.758		.174
	N	70	70	70	70
Religiosity	Pearson Correlation	.086	.497**	-.164	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.479	.000	.174	
	N	70	70	70	70

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

- The university authority should get ways to reduce the heavy workload of staff by lifting some responsibilities of staff those have full schedule working hours and distributing evenly the workload among them.
- The university authority should assist staff to develop their potential in performing by allowing them in their mission of flexibility and independence in working. Besides, the university authority should promote the image of staff as deserving respect.
- The university should see to the needs and wants of the staff by discussing with the government on increasing the wellbeing benefits and improving the social status of staff.

*Recommendation for university authority*

- The officers and managers should organize seminars and workshops to help staff to cope with work stress and reduce the feeling of strain.
- They should arouse the awareness of staff towards the importance of social support especially from managers, family and close friends and influence them to seek support whenever stress and strain arise.
- Also they should try to struggle for increasing the benefits of staff in terms of all kind of rewards so that staff security needs can be satisfied.

REFERENCES

- [1] D. Bonfiglio. "The interaction of dispositional optimism and social support in the moderation of cardiovascular responses to acute psychological stress". Ph.D, Dissertation. Graduate School of the Ohio State University, 2005.
- [2] C. S. Carver, M.F Scheier, and Wintrub, J.K. "Assessing coping strategies: A theoretically based approach". Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1989, 56,267-283.
- [3] A.W.H. Cheuk, K.S. Wong, and S. Rosen. "The effects of spurning and social support on teacher burnout". Journal of Social Behaviour and Personality, 1994, 9(4), 657-664.
- [4] S. Cobb. "Social support as a moderator of life stress". Psychosomatic Medicine, 1976, 5, 300-314.
- [5] C.E. Cutrona. "Stress and social support- in search of optimal matching". Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 1990, 9 (1), pp. 3-14.
- [6] D. Eden, D. (1990). "Acute and chronic job stress, strain and Vacation relief". Organizational Behaviour and Human Decision Process, 45, 175-193.
- [7] R.B Hays, and D. Oxley. "Social network development and functioning during life Transition". Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1986, 50, pp. 305-313.
- [8] M.O. Kim Wan. "Teacher burnout: Relations with stress personality, and social support Chinese University of Hong Kong". Educational Journal, 1991, 19 (1), pp. 3-11.
- [9] R.S. Lazarus, and Folkman. "Stress, appraisal and coping". New York, Springer.
- [10] J.W. Lounsbury, and L.L. Hooper. A vacation from work: Changes in work and non-work out comes. 1986, Journal of Applied psychology, 1984, 71, pp. 392-401.
- [11] G.R. Pierce, and B.R. Sarason, & I.G. Sarason. "Integrating social support Resources.
- [12] perspective: working models, personal relationships, and situational factors". In S. Duck (Ed.) with R.C. Silver, Personal relationships and social support. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990.
- [13] T.G. Plante, and M.T. Boccaccini. "The Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire". Pastoral Psychology, 1997a, 45, pp. 375-387.
- [14] D.W. Russell, E. Altmaier, and D. Velzen. "Job- related stress, social support and burnout among classroom teachers". Journal of Applied Psychology, 1987, 72 (2), pp.269-74.
- [15] D.W. Russell. "The provision of social relationships and adaptation to stress", in Jones, W.H., Perlman, D.(Eds), Advances in Personal Relationships, JAI Press, Greenwich, CT, 1987, 1, p.37-67.
- [16] S. Singh. "Organizational stress and executive behavior". Unpublished Research Monograph, Shri Ram Centre for Industrial Relations & Human Research, New Delhi, 1989.
- [17] M. Westman, and D. Eden. "Effects of vacation on job stress and burnout": Relief and fade-out. Journal of Applied psychology, 1997, 82, pp.516-527.