The Dimensions Of Work Stress Among Expatriates In Government Link Corporation – An Overview

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Abstract

The Due to rapid increase of competent and professional managers, the Malaysian Conglomerate Companies (GLC), under Khazanah Nasional Berhad had forced to hire professional employees from other countries that called expatriates. GLC is who are linked with Malaysian's Government linked companies such as UEM Group, Sime Darby, Petronas and also Celcom Axiata Berhad. The purpose of this research is to identify the factors and the level of work stress among expatriates in Celcom Axiata Berhad. To date, Celcom Axiata Berhad is among the largest telecommunication organization in Malaysia. Celcom Axiata Berhad want to maintain it competitiveness in the market therefore it would hire professional managers from others countries to manage certain operations. The author is using non-probability sampling technique, where 50 questionnaires over of 60 populations were distributed to the respondents who are the expatriates in Celcom Axiata Berhad. The author measured the dependent variable of work stress and three independent variables which are workload, role conflict and interpersonal relationship at workplace. The findings are interpreted by using Pearson Correlation Analysis, descriptive analysis, regression and hypothesis testing. The findings in Pearson Correlation Analysis showed all the independent variables are having significant relationship to work stress, as the dependent variables. Therefore, the entire hypothesis is accepted. The author is suggesting several options in order to reduce the work stress such as the expatriates should learn to prioritize their work according to their importance.

Keywords: Work Stress, GLC, Role Conflict, Workload

1.0 Introduction

In general, expatriates will usually encounter greater work load (namely stress) when working in different countries. Work stress became a major concern within this context since it will negatively impact expatriates' mental and physical health. For instance, most expatriates will suffer from various illnesses such as back and neck pain, high blood pressure and other critical illness. Fitzgerald (2004) suggests that work stress will significantly impact expatriates' performances. Cognitive overload is one major factor that influences employee's work progress (Tom Cox, 2000). Most of the Expatriates in Malaysia's GLCs are able to attend work-related pressure in their role set up by the organization. In addition, role pressure refers to the unfortunate pressures faced by higher level roles such as managers (Nurul Illahi Zainal Abidin, 2013).

Overall, the author chooses expatriates as part of their study because this group of participants usually faces high stress levels when they were asked to travel overseas to handle the company's business (Zainal Abidin, 2013) Work stress became common and serious where expatriates will suffer the difficulties when performing in their workplace. These are the challenges will keep them aggravated, and will provide them a sense of ambition. With the significantly amount of work stress, foreign managers and their employees' are suffer from mental and physical health. This will eventually affect the organization's performance (Gianakos, 2013).

Therefore, this study is focusing on the factors that influence the work stress as one of the expatriate in Information Technology Department stated that the expatriates in Celcom Axiata Berhad are stress because of excessive of work. Firstly, most of the expatriates believe that they are experiencing work stress because the amount of workload is too significant. Workload stress can be defined as a personal feeling where invariable pressure attended with general physiological and behavioral stress. If the amount of workload is too significant, the expatriates will ended up being absent for work (Gianakos, 2013). The author had asked a few questions for Human Resource and Trainings in Celcom Axiata Berhad regarding to expatriates problem of work stress. Based on their observation, most of the expatriates are having overloaded of work. This is because, they have high expectation from supervisor to manage all the big project by themselves. According to Subramaniam Sri Ramalu

(UPM Serdang), being overload with massive amount of work and time restraints can significantly impacta person whilst increasing their work stress.

Secondly, according to Jay, 2008 clearly stated that the expatriates are having difficulties to carry out the task given or role conflict. They are exposing to job that are not relate to their field (Jay, 2008). Based on the short interviewed that the author had done, an expatriate from Information Technology department stated that they are having difficulties to do their work. Sometimes, they are force to do job that are not relate to their scope of job. Besides that, most expatriates came from different region or countries that have different cultures, and religion. They have to learn to adapt the working culture when dealing with different groups of people.

Thirdly, based on Abdullah & Cheam (2011), the expatriates are having a work stress when they cannot coop well with the colleagues. Jay, (2008) believe that overloaded work stress can negatively affect the health of expatriates. From the short interview from Celcom Axiata Expatriates, sometimes they are having problem with their colleagues. They know that relationship between colleagues is very important. However, instead of important, it is not easy to really coop with them. According to them, most probably the main factor is the communication barriers and lack of social time together.

In a conclusion, the author has decided to study the factors that influence work stress and also to study the level of work stress among expatriates in Celcom Axiata Berhad. This study is beneficial for both organization and also the expatriates. Not only that, this study will also help them to reduce the amount of work stress whilst increase their healthy working environment.

2.0 Literature Review

Today, the importance of work stress became so significant to a stage where most developed countries will eventually test different approaches overcoming it. One of the main reasons is that most employees in any organizations are suffering from high level of work stress (or cognitive overload). Perhaps one of the most important reasons to highlight these problems is, they are not aware the main factors and the effects of these work stress. The consequences of employees who are suffering from high level of work stress is absenteeism, impact on work performances and wrong dosage of drugs to remain consciousness (Wong & Omar, 2011).

Moreover, Gianakos (2013) explained that work stress may be regarded as one of the most serious work-related illness, since the effect will negatively impact the employees' happiness and the efficacy of work task, whilst causing unnecessary disturbances to the company such as applying simultaneous work leaves or absenteeism, and finally affecting the company's revenue and performances. Parette Arington (2008) who works in National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health Unit, suggests that job stress is commonly recognized as work related stress. This is a psychology illness, where it can be defined as the capability or desires of workers that will affect individual's emotional and bodily reaction to the demands of a particular job.

In addition, work stress as known as the nreaction of the workers, especially from the higher level position towards the task given on them beyond their capabilities to handle it. This was written as an evident in the Occupational stressors and well-being among Chinese employees paper by Siu (2002). The effect of overload will become worst when the worker felt that they have no support or guide provided by their immediate supervisors or colleagues. The pressure generated from work stress (or overload) usually appears in many different conditions. These overloads are usually claimed as Stress and Pressure. The differences have been discussed and highlighted by Siu (2002). According to Arifin Zainal,Fatimah Omar (2010), the excessive amount of pressure will eventually be converted to stress, and therefore, generating work stress. Based on this research, most workers suffering from high level work stress will tend to be more aggressive in their personality. They will also suffer from mental and physically depressed when they failed to manage and perform a task given to them.

As a result, these employees will feel that they are not contributing to the organization According to Wong & Omar (2011), an employee may only manage one single task at the same time. Excessive amount of tasks at a time will produce significant work stress. More importantly, the studies of employees in the United States of America and the United Kingdom have proven that the increment of workload will lead to job stress. The study shows that most of the employees are well-educated workers. This group of employees can perform well, mainly managing the operation in the other countries. We called them the expatriates. Apparently, from this study, expatriates with higher level of education will usually be asked to work on maximum amount of tasks. As a result, most of them will usually fail managing it due to the amount of workload (Wong & Omar, 2011). If so,

there will be consequences for being overloaded, and it will usually produce the fatigue and stress feelings (Wong & Omar, 2011).

Based on Al-Aameri AS's. (2003) perspective, when a worker from an organization forced themselves to complete the job at a given time, the quality of work performance will usually decline in the learning curve and performance graph. In order to produce the work at a given deadline, performance will usually decrease. This is obvious, as workers can never focus when working under pressure. Their mind will only want them to complete the task. Fortunately, George & Marllery (2003) proposed several approaches to reduce workload. They suggest the only solution to overcome work load is to reduce the amount of work handled by the staff.

Alternatively, immediate supervisors should assign the task accordingly, particularly within specific period of time. For instance, asking their staff to work on one task after another. The completion time for a particular task should be reasonable (Mallery, 2003) .George & Mallery (2003) further suggest their study that having plenty of \work at a time will cause the staff to feel depress, they will not be able to complete the task perfectly. Elloy (2003) described that role conflict is a very serious yet hazardous status that will usually happen among workers. Role conflict exists due to the contradictory commands within single or multiple roles. Further evidence has been provided by Tang (2010), stating that the role conflict will be carried out when the employees have to decide whether or not choosing to contend demands or based on their expectations. Elloy (2003) further elaborated that role conflict will usually occur due to work conflict. This status will usually link with the work environment. Bad management skills will usually impact the employee periodically. In some recent researches, the role conflict can be one of the work stress factors that leads to serious occupational hazards for employees (Elloy, 2003).As result, the employees' performance will decrease.

Generally, the role conflict status became one of the most significant statuses in most companies. It is usually recognized either in smaller or larger organizations. The main factors that lead to the introduction of role conflict are the lack of clarity within the employees, their work objectives and also the high co-worker's expectation on them (Mark.F. Peterson. 1995). Apparently, employees could not perform properly. On the other hand, their job demands are incompatible. According to Tang (2010), role conflict produces negative effects to the employee. Additional work stress developed within the employee will be role ambiguity and family conflict. These are the stresses that will lead to the lack of attention, despite producing low aspects of work satisfaction (Tang, 2010). Sagie, A (2003) further elaborate, stating that employees whose work involving two ways communication with many different people will encounter different demand from customers, supervisors and also their colleagues. Interpersonal relationship in a workplace will usually happen between colleagues, or between employees and their supervisors. Building relationships are usually easy since it is part of the work nature in a company.

In addition, this relationship sometime can sometimes be produced in a creative way. Despite to the easiness of interaction between human, the generation of dissatisfaction may also be produced (Doh, Luthans, & Jonathan, 2009). According to Aldwin, (2008), if employees have a task to perform and that needed to be discussed with their team lead, some of the employees might feel there is something wrong at the end of the day. Perhaps this is part of their interpersonal skills. Team members in a team can be important in a team. However, they can also be a factor deteriorating enjoyability in a workplace. Moreover, as was written on the same article there will be negative and positive impact produced when communicating in a group. When there is a group of people working together, the interaction may produce happiness or work conflict (Aldwin, 2008)

The importance between the relationship among the team members and their subordinates are so important, and that they might be linked to mistrust and the support within their peers. This has been elaborated further by Aldwin (2008), where a good relationship between their colleagues or team members may bring safety in their future. Employees can perform well in an excellent work environment (Aldwin, 2008).

3.0 Methodology

The study was conducted by distributing questionnaires to 60 respondents, in which the samples were selected by simple random sampling approach. In this study, questionnaires divided into 4 sections:-

Section A: Demographic profile

Section B: Work Stress

Section C: Workload

Section D: Role Conflict

Section E: Interpersonal Relationship at work

The research concentrates in primary data that were collected through distributing self-administrated questionnaires at major parts of GLCs in Malaysia. Besides that, the questionnaires were also given to the customers of the company we were working before. Sampling method that has been used in this study is non-probability. Non-probability sampling designs rely on the personal judgment of the researcher sampling rather than chance to select the sample size. The researcher can arbitrarily or consciously decide the elements to include in the sample as cited in Malhotra, N.K (2004). In this study, the researcher collected data through two resources; primary data and secondary data.

The primary data is originated for a specific addressing of a problem at hand whereas secondary data are already published. Population refers to a complete group, consisting of individual's object, items of measurement to be taken. It also relates to the purpose of a study or survey. On October 7, 2013, the numbers of expatriates reached 60 employees. The age of expatriates in Celcom Axiata Berhad range between 25 and 55 years. Most expatriates in Celcom have different races, culture and region which constitutes throughout Asia, Africa, America, Europe and middle Eastern. However, based on table of sample size by Krejcie & Morgan (2007), when the population of the respondents in one place is 60, so the accurate sample size is only 50 people. Therefore, the sample size of this study is 50 expatriates.

4.0 Discussion

This chapter will discuss and concludes the findings of the research. In addition, the author also will come out with the solution in order to reduce the work stress among expatriates in Celcom Axiata Berhad. In this research, the author was discussing three factors that may be contributed in work stress. The three factors are workload, role conflict and interpersonal relationship. Based on the findings, the overall reliability test for all questions in the questionnaire is consider as "Good" with the total of reliability range is 0.781. It is mean that all the questions are reliable to been ask. The Cronbach's Alpha has been use in order to determine the reliability of the questions that will use. The author also tested all the questions based on the variables. The first variable is workload. The reliability result for workload is 0.875, which mean the questions prepared are "Very Good".

The second independent variable is role conflict. Cronbach's Alpha for this variable is 0.784 which can be considered as "Good". Interpersonal relationship at work is the last variable and has 0.775 of the Cronbach's Alpha which can be considered as "Good". Based on the all reliability test given, all the questions in the questionnaires are excellent and suitable to be answer. In this research, there are 4 objectives that had been written. The first objective is to study the level of work stress among expatriates in Celcom Axiata Berhad.

Based on mean, work stress with a mean of 3.800 indicates that the many of the respondents are answered the 4.00 (Agree) of having work stress. In addition, most of them are agree with the work stress when the total of respondents answered 4.00 (Agree) and 5.00 (Strongly Agree) is more than those who answered 2.00 (Disagree) and 3.00 (Neutral). It is means that majority of the respondents are having the work stress based on the answered that given.

The second objective is to determine whether workload, role conflict and interpersonal relationship at work are correlated with the work stress. The result shows there is a positive and very strong correlation between workload and work stress with the total is 0.927(**). There is positive and strong relationship between role conflict and work stress as well as the variables is correlated between role conflict and work stress with 0.799(**). There is and moderate significant correlation relationship between interpersonal relationship at work and work stress. All the variables are significant to 0.000 significant values.

The third objective is to identify which factor is most significant to Work Stress among expatriates in Celcom Axiata Berhad. Based on the analysis in this research, the most significant factor is workload. The highest number in the Beta and under standardized coefficient column is 0.818 for workload which is significant at 0.000. In addition, the workload ranks the first in comparison by the means among all the variables. The workload variable has 3.8080 which are the highest among them. It has been followed by the role conflict and interpersonal relationship at work with 3.5200 and 3.3840 respectively.

5.0 Conclusion

In a trade and economy globalization, an organization may have big challenges at work. In the same time, they will hire expatriates from other countries to manage the business. At the beginning, they are excited to be in their new posting. However, they need to spend a lot of time at work and also need to adapt the new culture and they are under pressure when they must to responsible on all their new responsibility at work. The excessive work

may lead them to work stress. The excessive work stress can affects the productivity and reduces physical and emotional health, so it is important to find a way in order to reduce the high level of work stress. There are many options can do to manage the work stress among expatriates in Celcom Axiata Berhad. In order to manage the work stress, the expatriates should learn the art of prioritizing.

Majority of the expatriates feel that whatever ask given to them, they need to finished the entire task on that day. Firstly, they need to know how to prioritize their work. Make the list of tasks on what have to do and grab them according to their importance. In a simple way, do the high importance items first. In addition, they should be more systematic. Do the list and they can follow the sequence on what should do first and what that can be done later. This system can actually make them more relax on doing their work because they do not have to rush to complete the task. Moreover, with the list, they also can detect which work that they not finished yet.

Besides, the supervisors actually play an important role. They need to be more sensitive and concern towards their employees. They need to make a regulation that the employees and also the expatriates should leave the office by 7 P.M, so that they have more time to take a rest at home. In addition, the supervisor also can make it a must to all employees and expatriates to join all the outdoors activities that make by organization or need them to have a lunch team so that the expatriates would ignore their routine activities and still keep fit and healthy. In order to reduce the problem of the role conflict, there are several ways that can be taking.

Firstly, the supervisor must know the capabilities of their expatriates under their supervision. Some of the expatriates may not have capabilities and expertise to handle some task. So, the supervisor should not give them task that they do not expert on. This is because, when they are unable to complete the task in a limited time given, it will cause of work stress. In other hand, in order to reduce the uncertainties on what should they do and having tasks that have no relation to them, the expatriates themselves should ask the supervisor or their colleagues on how to manage the task properly.

Sometimes, they are unable to handle the assignments especially that emphasize the local culture. It is an effective way if the management of the organization can bring all the expatriates to the trainings and they should be regularly monitored. According to this research, most expatriates said that there are insufficient training programs held in order to manage the assignments given. At the individual level, expatriates also can be support from their family's members and friends.

Overall, it is a win-win situation between organization and individual themselves. They need to re-check by themselves and find their own way in order to reduce the high level of work stress. The work stress is become the hazard occupational disease nowadays. So, it is important that either the expatriates themselves or from organization to take precaution steps and know how to deal with this disease. If the work stress are not been reduced, it will affect the expatriates performance as well as the organization benefits

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