

# Factors of Relationship Between Occupational Stress, Developing Training Needs and Performance Enhancement of SMEs' Employees in Melaka

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the factors of relationship between occupational stress, developing training needs and performance enhancement of SMEs' employees in Melaka. The occupational stress factors consist of Intrinsic to the Job, Role in Organization, Career Development, Relationship at Work and Organizational Structure. The results indicate that there is a positive correlation between all the occupational stress factors on training needs and performance enhancement SMEs' employees in Melaka. Thus, all the occupational stress factors are correlated and could be used in developing training needs development and the performance enhancement of employees. The findings revealed that the Intrinsic to the Job factors were the greatest sources of occupational stress to SMEs' employees. The Stepwise Multimpule Regression Test revealed that the best predictors of Occupational Stress Factors on Training Needs are Organizational Structure and Relationship at Work. Occupational stress does affect an individual's ability to address workplace challenges.

**Keywords:** *Occupational stress, occupational stress factors, training needs, performance enhancement*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia context, the occupational stress has become an issue when the country progresses from its developing status towards a developed status and with greater rural-urban migration and urbanization of its population, mental health disorders are bound to increase. According to the National Health and Morbidity Survey in 2006, chronic psychiatric morbidity is much higher among those with tertiary education, senior officers, managers and professionals. This could be due to the stress associated with heavier job responsibilities of these people. It is thus important for Malaysians to be aware of mental health disorders of people in the community, and their lives (Institute of Public Health, Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2008). Occupational stress can reduce productivity, increase mistakes and accidents at work, encourage absenteeism, lower morale, increase conflict with others and cause physical and emotional problems (Pflanz and Ogle, 2006) and finally poor life satisfaction (Pawar and Rathod, 2007). Finally, results the lower performance of individual, organisation and the country.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term of "occupational stress", is stress caused by occupations that the employees are holding now and commonly used for a decade or more. In organisations, work stress also known as job stress and/or occupational stress and these terms often used interchangeably but their meanings refer to the same thing (Abu-Al-Rub, 2004; Larson, 2004). Occupational is a serious health issue for organizations and employees. For instance, the stressful situations of the workplace due to occupational stress lead to negative consequences like

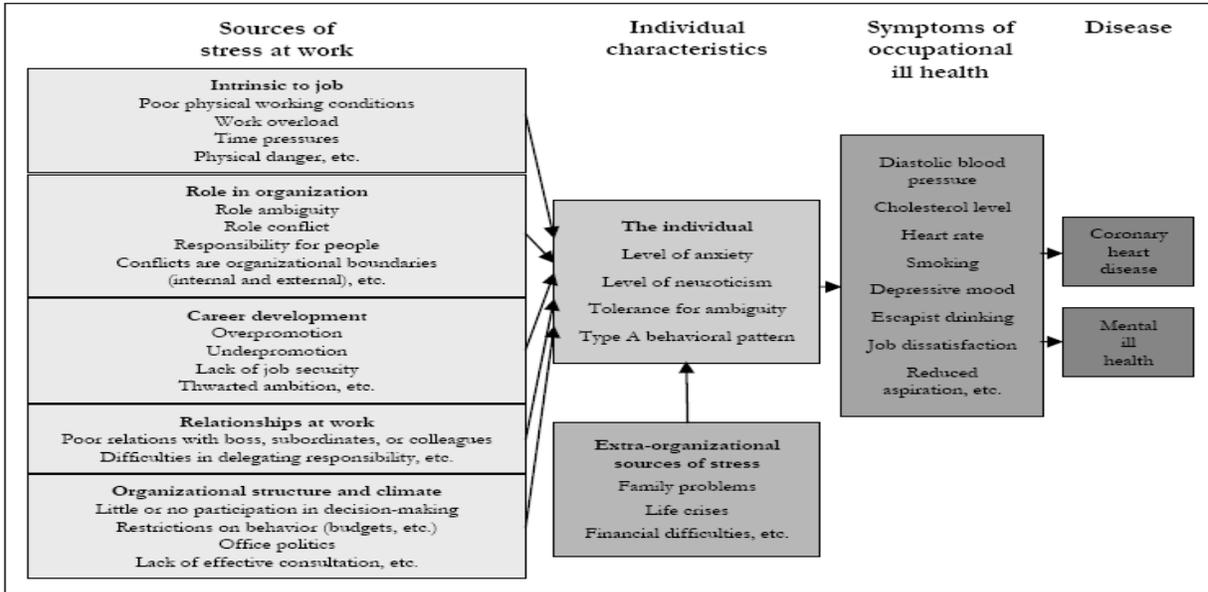
anxiety, headache, stomach distress and cardiovascular disease (Spector, 2002). Occupational stress is described as any discomfort that perceived by individuals who their capabilities and resources cannot be coped to demands, events, and stressful situations in their workplace.

In several of studies, occupational stress will demonstrate the perception of occupational stress and its negative effects on employee's satisfaction, commitment and productivity in the different contexts and situations (Michael, 2009). The occupational stress effects would enable the training needs development and in the same time gauging the performance enhancement of SMEs' employees.

### 2.1 Occupational of Stress Model (Cooper and Marshall, 1976)

The occupational stress factors chosen in this study is based on Cooper and Marshall's (1976) original model of work related stress that includes five sources of stress at work. Past research reveals that occupational stress factors consist of elements as in the Occupational Stress Model by Cooper and Marshall (1976). The occupational stress elements introduced by this model stated at the beginning of this chapter. Even though the model is used generally in health related studies, but it also applicable to this study as it covers almost all the important areas of individuals' employees and organisations. Individuals in a working environment are deemed inter-related one to another.

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Source: Cooper, C. L., Marshall, J. (1976), Occupational sources of stress: a review of the literature relating to coronary heart disease and mental ill health, *Journal of occupational psychology*, Vol. 49, No. 1, pp. 12

Fig 1: Occupational Stress Model (Cooper and Marshall, 1976)

### 2.1.1 Intrinsic to the Job Factors

The first variable employed in this study of occupational stress factor is intrinsic to the job, which includes factors such as poor physical working conditions, work overload or time pressure. The factors classified in these categories namely, working conditions, hours worked, and work under load/overload. The principles of job satisfaction and motivation are closely linked to each other, and to an effective and productive workplace (Kinicki and Kreitner, 2007; Koys, 2001; Chen and Francesco, 2003, Tziner et. al. 2008; Mowday et. al. 1982; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Bono et. al. 2001; Greguras et. al. 2004). Therefore, in order to improve job involvement, employers should foster a satisfying work environment for a range of personality types (Kinicki and Kreitner, 2007).

The basic premise or the most important strain in this model is when the employees suffer a high amount of stress and demands while they have low amount of control to cope themselves in the stressful situations, so they are more stressed (Kain and Jex, 2010).

### 2.1.2 Role in Organization Factors

The second factors of role in organization has always been an important variable which is always been used throughout the occupational research. Role of ambiguity refers to situations when an individual does not have clear information about his or her work objectives, work scope, or supervisors, which leads to higher job-related stress. It is indeed critical to identify job duties clearly and specifically. Job descriptions and orientation programs should be utilized at the beginning of employment. According to Piskar (2006), an organization must monitor its activities in order to observe whether the activities are executed according to the set plans. Regular

team meetings may also help clarify role conflicts and role ambiguity between work units (Lee and Akhtar, 2007).

### 2.1.3 Career Development Factors

#### a. Job Insecurity

Researchers have identified job security as one of the most important components of human resource practices (Pfeffer, 1995) which indicate organization's commitment to their workforce, while there are evidences that job security enhances employees organizational commitment (Chang and Chen, 2002; Meyer and Smith, 2000; Wong, Ngo, and Wong, 2002). This motivates employees to exchange their obligation by showing reciprocal commitment to the organization. Similarly, Chang (2005) states that through job security the organization demonstrates commitment to the employees, and in return employees reciprocate the commitment to the organization. In one study, Delery and Doty (1996) show a positive relationship between firm performance and employee job security. According to Samuel and Chipunza (2009), job security is found to have significantly influencing factors in employee retention in both public and private organizations.

#### b. Appraisal Systems

An effective appraisal system evaluates accomplishments of work performance and the information gathered can be used for recruitment, training and development, compensation and internal employee relations (Mondy, 2010). Kuvaas (2006) argued that an advocate's performance appraisal system is considered as the mechanism for motivating, developing and retaining employees in the organization. Employees are expected to repeat positive behavior in anticipation of rewards and

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recognition given by the firm. Thus, firms use compensation and rewards as the tools to elicit, enhance, and maintain the desired knowledge sharing behavior of employees.

### c. Performance Measurement

Performance measurement was a key consideration, and the scheme selected for a particular study can influence the results substantially (Cavalieri et al. 2007; Jusoh and Parnell, 2008; Pongatchat and Johnston, 2008; Ramanujam and Venkatraman, 1987; Venkatraman and Ramanujam, 1986). Source of stress were found that highest employees' rate because of lack of knowledge about performance evaluations as one of the highest sources of stress.

### d. Promotion

Promotion opportunity has been defined as the degree of professional upward mobility within the organization. In other words, it is a formal appreciation or acknowledgement of one's performance from the management (Tan, 2008). According to Price (2001) opportunity for promotion brings satisfaction among the employees and reduces their intention of leaving the organization. Previous studies have found that there is significant and positive relation between promotion practices and individual employee performance (Shahzad et al. 2008; Teseema and Soeters, 2006; Delaney and Huselid, 1996).

#### 2.1.4 Relationship at Work Factors

Relationship at work factors includes the relationship with clients, peers or colleagues and supervisors. Occupational stress may occur when there is poor relationship between the employees, clients, colleagues and supervisors. This poor relationship may cause occupational stress to the employees. All businesses created by SMEs aim to offer their clients with competitive products and services. Several researchers have suggested that organizations that focus their activities on the needs of their customers perform better than those companies that do not and, are more likely to accomplish long-term goals and increased financial performance (Homburg et al. 2002; Lytle and

Supervisory support refers to positive evaluation and instruction of one's performance, job direction, career mentoring, and the expansion of one's career network (Tan, 2008), and the provision of such support is essential for developing, motivating and retaining knowledge workers (Bigliardi, Petroni, and Dormio, 2005).

#### 2.1.5 Organizational Structure Factors

Organizations should ensure that the employees are clear of all organizational rules and procedures, have proper work schedules and be clear on all policies. Organizational structure defines how job tasks are formally divided, grouped, and coordinated. It is defined as the hierarchical relation among members of the

organization (March and Simon, 1958), and is viewed as facilitating interaction and communication for coordination and control of the organizations' activities (El Louadi, 1998). It is implemented in terms of specialization, formalization, and centralization.

### a. Concept of Training Needs

In general, training refers to a planned effort ease the learning of job-related knowledge, skill, and behavior by employee. Practically, training can serve to develop the employees keep up with current practices in their profession and to improve their expertise. Hence, the training needs play an important role in measuring the insufficient development areas of employees. Daniels (2008) mentions in her article that in the current economic situation; companies may be tempted to cut their training budgets, but they should not abandon training.

Bowman and Wilson (2008) stated that training needs analysis is an important step in the systematic training cycle, which have the stages of training design, training delivery, and evaluation. TNA is an important HRM activity, and is defined as, a methodical investigation and analysis into an organization's current and desired performance levels, focusing heavily on the ability of its staff and their support networks (Denby, 2010; Peters, 1994). If TNA is not carried out adequately, training may not be consistent with the needs of employees or the organization.

### b. The Use of Training Needs in the Present Study

According to Noe et al. (2008), training is described as a planned effort designed by the organization in assisting its employees in the learning process of job related competencies, such as knowledge, skills, or behaviors that are vital for the success of individual's job performances. Whereas development refers to formal education, job experiences enhancement, assessment of personality and abilities that help employees prepare for the future (Noe et al. 2008). Training activities are proven to give positive effect on company performance (Valle et al. 2009).

### c. Concept of Performance Enhancement

Sarmiento and Beale (2007) refer job performance as the result of two elements, which consist of the abilities and skills (natural or acquired) that an employee possesses, and his/her motivation to use them in order to perform a better job. Excellent performance is always an important goal for any firm or organisation. In general, performance can be defined as an increase of efficiency, efficacy, and working quality in an organization. Employers risk the potential loss of talented, trained employees due to occupational stress and its results in performance.

### d. The Use of Performance Enhancement in the Study

In Malaysia, the SMEs are under increasing pressure to improve their performance level (Normah,

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2006). SMEs are regarded as critical especially when these businesses have been contributing to the growth and promoting competitiveness (Caniel and Romijn, 2005) of many nations. Hence, enhancing their job performance is critical since highly performing individuals will be able to assist organizations to achieve strategic aims thus sustaining the organizations competitive advantage (Lado and Wilson, 1994; Dessler, 2011).

#### e. Concept of SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises)

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have been the backbone of economic growth of an economy in driving industrial development (Normah, 2006). They should enable businesses to prepare high quality products and services to compete (Sousa-Poza, Altinkilinc, and Searcy, 2009). SMEs play a big role in national economies by providing job opportunities and supporting the big industries.

#### f. Concept of Human Resource Development

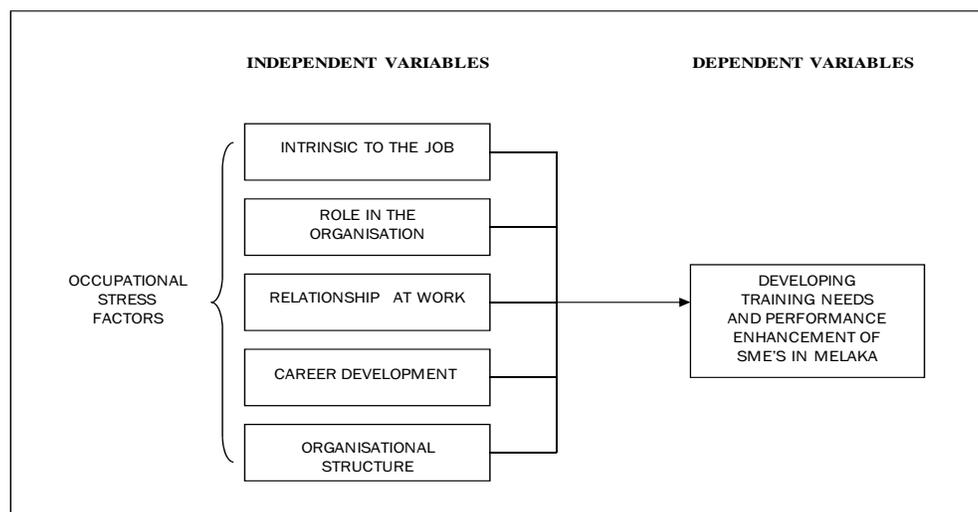
Those studies presented evidence that suggested good human resource practices have significant impact on the innovation performance of organizations. The adoption of the concepts of HRD has been slow and cautious in the Malaysian corporate sector (Chiah-Law et. al. 2003). Multinational companies operating in Malaysia are relatively better off compared to local enterprises as they import their HR policies from their HQs, or replicate the best practices adopted in other international units. HRD has an important contribution in an organization, thus, the orientation must be broaden to facilitate boundary management and networking, both within and

outside the organizations (McCarthy et. al. 2003; Luoma, 2000).

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Design

The research design provides the basic directions in carrying out the research. It involves the location of the study (the study setting), type of study, the duration of the study, data collection methods, and the variables that will be measured and analyzed to test the hypothesis (Sekaran, 2003; Saunders et. al. 2007). A research design states the structure of research problem and the plan of investigation used to obtain empirical evidence in relation to the research problem (Bakers, 1995). Primary data collected through self-administered questionnaire through the respondent for this study which includes Senior Manager, Manager Senior Executive and Assistant Manager within the state of Melaka. A research model was developed as in figure 2. This model is used to assist in determining research instruments, formulating relationships between variables as well as to enable research questions to be tested. The model is also used for validation and model testing and in this study, it served as a heuristic character for exploring relationships between its variables.



**Fig 2:** Theoretical Framework on Relationship of Occupational Stress Factors in Developing Training Needs and Performance Enhancement of SME's Employees in Melaka

#### 3.2 Pilot Test

A pilot test was conducted by sending the questionnaire booklet to 40 randomly selected companies. However, the response rate is only 50 per cent. In calculating, the average of the coefficients from all

combination of split halves to obtain coefficient alpha. Coefficient alpha ranges from 0 to 1. Acceptable levels of reliability depend on the purpose of the instrument. The reliability of Occupational Stress Cronbach's Alpha for pilot analysis is ( $\alpha=0.950$ ). The results of Cronbach's

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Alpha for Intrinsic to the Job is  $\alpha=0.892$ , Role in Organization is  $\alpha=0.878$ , Relationship at Work is  $\alpha=0.842$ , Career Development is  $\alpha=0.813$  and Organizational Structure is  $\alpha=0.857$ . Meanwhile, the Training Needs Cronbach's Alpha is  $\alpha=0.878$  and Performance Enhancement is  $\alpha=0.899$ .

### 3.3 Reliability of the OS, TN and PE Scale

The results of Cronbach's Alpha for the five sub-dimensional constructs reveal that Intrinsic to the Job is  $\alpha=0.8333$ , Role in Organization is  $\alpha=0.878$ , Relationship at Work is  $\alpha=0.801$ , Career Development is  $\alpha=0.813$  and Organizational Structure is  $\alpha=0.857$ . The result reveals that Cronbach's Alpha values occupational stress factor is  $\alpha=0.943$ . The Cronbach's Alpha value for OS scale measure in this study (23 items) is deemed acceptable at  $\alpha=0.943$ . The concepts of training needs are assessed using items developed derived with moderately high values of score of 0.878. Similar to dimensions of Performance Enhancement for this study reveals reveals that Cronbach's Alpha values is  $\alpha=0.883$ . It can be concluded that the questionnaires variables exhibit good reliability levels and produces statically valid result. All the variables shows the Cronbach alpha values of 8.0 above where satisfies Nunnally's (1978).

### 3.4 Exploratory Data Analysis (EDA)

Exploratory data analysis help to detect or identify mistakes made during the data coding process. It refers to the process such as entering some responses twice, skipping some responses and transposing digits that might give rise to unusual values, extreme values, data gaps, outliers and other peculiarities in the data set (Salant and Dillman, 1994), and mistakes and errors due to incorrect data entries. Otherwise, it could give rise to measurement errors. Secondly, this procedure according to Cramer (1997) help to examine and check whether the data set meet the basic assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity before conducting parametric test such as linear multiple regression analysis. It includes checking for assumptions whether multicollinearity existed between independent variables in the study.

## 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### 4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents Analysis (Descriptive Analysis)

The respondents' gender profile the analysis shows that, there are 65.5% (118) Males as compared to 34.4% (62) Females in the overall sample. In the distribution of respondents by their age group shows that respondents are distributed in the age group of 18-30 years (5.6%), 35.6% for the age group of 31-40 years, 38.3% for 41-50 years and 20.6% for those above the age of 51. The analysis shows that the highest number of respondents who participated in the study are Malay with 92 (51.1%) respondents, followed by Chinese 78 (43.32%), Indian 7 (3.9%) and others 3 (1.7%) respectively. Total number of 96 respondents (53.3%) are married whereas, 84 (47.7%) of the respondents are

single, and none responded in the "divorcee" and "others" category.

#### 4.1.1 Professional Profiles of Respondents

The distribution of respondents by companies' size shows that 50.6% of respondents are from small sized companies whereas 49.4% are from the medium-sized companies. The respondents consist of Managerial positions, which consist of Senior Manager 14.4%, followed by 22.2% Manager, 46.1%, Senior Executive and 17.2% from the Assistant Manager. In terms of education attainment, 6.1% possess SPM Certificate, 8.9% having STPM qualification, 47.2% have a Bachelor's Degree, and 15% respondents are with Diploma, 21.1% of respondent have a Master's Degree and 1.7% respondents with Doctorate in Philosophy. Most of the respondents 46.1% have 10 - 14 years working experience. 32.3% had been working for less than 5 years followed by 11.1% with 15 - 19 years of experience and 8.9% with 20 - 24 years of experience. Only 1.7% of the respondents have a working experience of 25 to 29 years and none have working experience more than 30 years. Analysis shows that 21.2% of the respondents who participated in this study indicate that they felt like looking for another job due to the occupational stress. Whereas 79.8% of respondents didn't felt looking for another job due to occupational stress. As for the question whether the nature of the current work of the respondents related to their previous working experience, it is evident that only almost 14.4% of the respondents' current work is related to their previous working experience and 85.6% have not related to their previous working experience.

#### 4.2 Differences in Demographic Variables, Training Needs and Performance Enhancement (Inferential Analysis)

The t-test in shows that there is a significant difference in training needs between Male and Female employees  $\{t = 2.532, p < .05\}$  of SME's employees. The mean score indicates that the training needs indicators of Male employees ( $M = 14.152, SD = 4.556$ ) and Female employees ( $M = 12.032, SD = 6.586$ ). The result shows the most training needs influence based on this finding is from Male with mean of 14.152. Similarly, there is also a significant difference in Performance Enhancement between Male and Female employee  $\{t = -.683, p < .05\}$  of SME's. The mean score indicates that the performance enhancement of Male employees ( $M = 26.779, SD = 5.617$ ) and Female employees ( $M = 33.000, SD = .678$ ). The result shows the most performance enhancement influence based on this finding is from female with mean of 33.000.

There is a significant difference in training needs between Married and Single employees  $\{t = -.2972, p < .05\}$  of SME's employees. The mean score indicates that the training needs indicators of Married employees ( $M = 12.322, SD = 6.187$ ) and single status employees ( $M = 14.677, SD = 4.066$ ). The result shows the most training needs influence based on this finding is from single status

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employees with mean of 14.677. Similarly, there is also a significant difference in Performance Enhancement between Married and Single employees  $\{t = 1.085, p < .05\}$  of SME's. The mean score indicates that the performance enhancement of Married employees ( $M = 29.333, SD = 6.058$ ) and Single employees ( $M = 28.452, SD = 4.618$ ). The result shows the most performance influence based on this finding is from married employees with mean of 29.333.

It shows that there is a significant difference in training needs between Small and Medium Size company  $\{t = 1.391, p < .05\}$  of SME's employees. The mean score indicates that the training needs indicate that Small Size Company ( $M = 13.929, SD = 4.490$ ) and Medium Size Company ( $M = 12.802, SD = 6.349$ ). The result shows the most training needs influence based on this finding is from Small Size Company with mean of 13.929. Similarly, there is also a significant difference in Performance Enhancement between Small Size Company and Medium Size Company  $\{t = 1.085, p < .05\}$  of SME's employees. The mean score indicates that the performance enhancement indicate that Small Size Company employees ( $M = 29.010, SD = 4.730$ ) and Medium Size Company employees ( $M = 28.815, SD = 6.223$ ). The result shows the most performance enhancement influence based on this finding is from Small Size Company with mean of 29.010.

There is also significant difference in training needs between the employees looking for other job due to occupational stress and employees who do not feel looking for other job due to stress  $\{t = -.5489, p < .05\}$ . The mean score indicates that employees who feel like executing current job ( $M = 9.447, SD = 2.938$ ) and employees looking for other job due to occupational stress ( $M = 14.485, SD = 5.443$ ) in the training needs. The result shows the most training needs influence based on this finding is from employees who do not feel looking for other job due to stress with mean of 14.485.

There is a significant difference in performance enhancement between the employees looking for other job due to occupational stress and employees who do not feel looking for other job due to stress  $\{t = 2.627, p < .05\}$  of SME's employees. The mean score indicates employees looking for other job due to occupational stress ( $M = 30.947, SD = 2.277$ ) and employees who do not feel looking for other job due to stress ( $M = 28.380, SD = 5.8977$ ). The result shows the most performance enhancement influence based on this finding is employees looking for other job due to occupational stress 30.947.

Training needs shows no significant difference in the between the existence of relationship of current and previous working experience of employees  $\{t = -4.6233, p > .05\}$ . Similarly, there is no significant difference in performance enhancement between the existence of relationship of current and previous work and non-existence of relationship of current and previous work of employees  $\{t = -.457, p > .05\}$  of SME's employees.

#### **4.2.1 Differences in TN and PE Means Scores with Regards to Age**

The ANOVA test approach is used in analyzing the element of Hypothesis 1 from 180 respondents. It has resulted that the highest mean scores is the age of 18 – 30 years employees ( $M=21.000, SD=.0000, N=10$ ) compared to the the age of 51 years and above employees as the lowest mean scores in this study ( $M=14.351, SD=6.312, N=37$ ). A one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore the significance of age of employees and training needs tendencies. It shows that there are have a statistical significant difference between groups ( $F(3,176)=34.611, p=.000$ ). This implies that this hypothesis is substantiated.

Similarly, it has resulted that the highest mean scores is the age of 18 – 30 years employees ( $M=34.000, SD=.0000, N=10$ ) compared to the age of 41 – 50 years employees as the lowest mean scores in this study ( $M=26.797, SD=5.989, N=69$ ). A one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore the significance of age of employees and performance enhancement. It shows that there are have a statistical significant difference between groups ( $F(3,176)=8.699, p=.000$ ). This implies that this hypothesis is substantiated.

#### **4.2.2 Differences in TN and PE Means Scores with Regards to Race**

The analysis depicted that the highest mean scores is "Others" class in the race of employees ( $M=15.333, SD=.5773, N=3$ ) compared to Indian employees as the lowest mean scores in this study ( $M=11.571, SD=7.976, N=7$ ). A one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore the significance of races of employees and training needs tendencies as illustrated in table 23. It shows that there are have a statistical no significant difference between groups ( $F(3,176)=2.458, p=.064$ ). The significant level is more than 0.05 and this implies that this hypothesis is not substantiated.

The highest mean scores is the Chinese employees ( $M=30.525, SD=5.216, N=78$ ) compared to Indian employees as the lowest mean scores in this study ( $M=23.714, SD=11.026, N=7$ ). A one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore the significance of age of employees and performance enhancement tendencies. It shows that there are have a statistical significant difference between groups ( $F(3,176)=6.424, p=.000$ ) as depicted in table 25. This implies that this hypothesis is substantiated.

#### **4.2.3 Differences in TN and PE Means Scores with Regards to Job Title/Position**

The highest mean scores is the Manager Position of employees ( $M=16.825, SD=4.940, N=40$ ) compared to Senior Executive Position as the lowest mean scores in this study ( $M=10.734, SD=4.988, N=83$ ). A one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore the significance of position and

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training needs tendencies in table 27. It shows that there are have a statistical significant difference between groups ( $F(3,176)=17.460$ ,  $p=.000$ ). This implies that this hypothesis is substantiated.

Manager Position shows the highest mean scores of the employees ( $M=31.1500$ ,  $SD=5.255$ ,  $N=40$ ) compared to the Senior Manger employees as the lowest mean scores in this study ( $M=24.076$ ,  $SD=6.105$ ,  $N=26$ ). A one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted as shown in Table 29 to explore the significance of position of employees and performance enhancement. It shows that there are have a statistical significant difference between groups ( $F(3,176)=12.026$ ,  $p=.000$ ). This implies that this hypothesis is substantiated.

#### 4.2.4 Differences in TN and PE Means Scores with Regards to Education

The ANOVA test approach illustrated that the highest mean scores for employees holding the Diploma ( $M=15.185$ ,  $SD=3.363$ ,  $N=27$ ) compared to employees holding PhD the lowest mean scores in this study ( $M=11.000$ ,  $SD=.000$ ,  $N=3$ ). A one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted as illustrated in table 31 to explore the significance of education of employees and training needs tendencies. It shows that there are have a statistical no significant difference between groups ( $F(5,174)=1.501$ ,  $p=.192$ ). This implies that this hypothesis is not substantiated.

It is depicted that the highest mean scores is the employees holding Diploma ( $M=31.296$ ,  $SD=1.793$ ,  $N=27$ ) compared to the employees holding SPM Certificate as the lowest mean scores in this study ( $M=23.636$ ,  $SD=8.709$ ,  $N=11$ ). As illustrated in table 33, A one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore the significance of education of employees and performance enhancement tendencies. It shows that there are have a statistical significant difference between groups ( $F(5,176)=7.045$ ,  $p=.000$ ). This implies that this hypothesis is substantiated.

#### 4.2.5 Differences in TN and PE Means Scores with Regards to Years of Service

The highest mean scores is the employees who work 15 – 19 years ( $M=14.850$ ,  $SD=5.214$ ,  $N=20$ ) compared to employees work less than 5 years as the lowest mean scores in this study ( $M=12.206$ ,  $SD=6.346$ ,  $N=58$ ). A one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted as presented in table 35, to explore the significance of length of service of employees and training needs tendencies. It shows that there are have a statistical significant difference between groups ( $F(4,175)=1.260$ ,  $p=.000$ ). This implies that this hypothesis is substantiated.

Employees work less than 5 years employees displays that the highest mean scores is ( $M=32.655$ ,  $SD=1.264$ ,  $N=58$ ) compared to employees work 10 – 14

years as the lowest mean scores in this study ( $M=26.313$ ,  $SD=5.0120$ ,  $N=83$ ). Table 37 shows that a one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore the significance of length of service of employees and performance enhancement. It shows that there are have a statistical significant difference between groups ( $F(4,175)=16.617$ ,  $p=.000$ ). This implies that this hypothesis is substantiated.

#### 4.2.6 The prevalence of the Occupational Stress Factors of SMEs' employees in Melaka

The demographic variables were examined for the prevalence of occupational stress to demonstrate the extent to which occupational stress and its various dimensions were being felt and existed as perceived by SMEs' employees. It shows that the correlations analysis are the simple Pearson correlation coefficients that show that occupational stress factors have a large positive correlation with training needs. The correlation is significant at .85 ( $p < 0.01$ ). However, the linear relationship of occupational stress and performance enhancement is not strong as compared with training needs. The correlation is significant at .15 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

The sample employees' inclination to OS was measured and the variance of all variables indicated that most respondents are very close to the mean on all the variables. Thus, it shows that all the variables contributed to occupational stress which the highest from Role in Organisation factor.

## 5. FINDINGS

### 5.1 Predictors of Occupational Stress on Training Needs

The final objective of this study is to identify the best predictors for explaining Training Needs. A-fix predictors multiple linear regression model is proposed. The five-predictor variables are Occupational Stress dimensions. The result shows that only four predictors' variables are found to be significant which are of Role in Organization ( $\beta = -.76$ ), Organizational Structure ( $\beta = .49$ ), Career Development ( $\beta = -.35$ ) and Relationship at Work ( $\beta = .31$ ) excluding the Intrinsic to the Job factor. The overall correlation between the independent variables and criterion variables is at .48. The result shows that the predictors variable contributes .23 % ( $r=.48$ ) variance in the score. However, predictor variable Intrinsic to the Job was removed due to insignificant value of  $p < 0.05$ .

The analysis of results shows in table 40 and table 41 that the Role in Organization ( $\beta = .38$ ,  $p < .05$ ) contributes 14.3% ( $r = .38$ ) variance in the occupational stress score [ $F(1, 177) = 29.64$ ,  $p < .05$ ]. Combination of the two variables of Role in Organization ( $\beta = -.75$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and Organizational Structure ( $\beta = .43$ ,  $p < 0.5$ ) contributes 19.2% variance ( $r = .44$ ) in the variance of occupational stress score [ $F(2, 176) = 20.93$ ]. Besides, when the variable predictors of Career Development was included, all the three predictors variables contribute to

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21.3% ( $r = .46$ ) resulting in the variance in occupational stress score [ $F(3, 175) = 15.814$ ]. Whereas the combination between predictors variables Role in Organization ( $\beta = -.77, p < .05$ ), Organizational Structure ( $\beta = .49, p < 0.5$ ), Career Development ( $\beta = -.35, p < 0.5$ ) and Relationship at Work ( $\beta = .31$ ) significantly contributed 23% ( $r = .48$ ) to the variance of occupations stress score [ $F(4, 174) = 13.19, p < .05$ ].

The Role in organization, Relationship at Work, Career development and Organizational structure are identified as the predictors of the variables of occupational stress factors. However, the best predictor chosen by the statistical program is Organizational Structure, one of the components of occupational stress. Organizational Structure yielded a multiple regression coefficient (R) of .44. The coefficient of determination  $R^2$  of Organizational Structure shows that this variable by itself contributes to 19.2% of the variance in training needs.  $R^2$  expressed the amount of variance in the criterion of the variable that was predictable from a predictor variable or combination of predictor variables. The stepwise multiple regression analysis last selection of variable selected Relationship at Work, one of the components of occupational stress as the second predictor of training needs. With the second predictor, the value of R increases to .48. The coefficient of determination  $R^2$  of career development shows that this variable by itself contributes 23.3% of the variance in training needs.

The highest beta coefficient is .43, which derives from Organizational Structure which means the strongest contributor to the overall equation ( $\beta = .43$ ). This variable is followed by Relationship at Work ( $\beta = .31$ ). However, predictors of Role in Organization ( $\beta = -.38$ ) and Career Development ( $\beta = -.30$ ) to be excluded as they are not significant predictors in this model. To conclude, the multiple regression models for training needs in standard score units are as follows:

$$\text{Training Needs} = .43 (\text{Organizational Structure}) + .31 (\text{Relationship at Work})$$

This model suggests that the overall training needs of employees could be enhanced significantly by improving the training with the Organizational structure and Relationship at Work factors in reducing their occupational stress in their workplace.

## 5.2 Predictors of Occupational Stress on Performance Enhancement

In finding out the predictors of performance enhancement, the stepwise multiple regression method is used to identify the significant predictors of the training needs and job performance. An F-test is used to determine the significance of the overall model. The result of the data analysis by SPSS shows that all the predictors of variables factors are found to be removed as none of the predictors contributes significantly to performance enhancement.

## 6. IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 Implications

#### 6.1.1 Interpretation the Prevalence of Occupational Stress amongst the Respondents

The interest of this study is also to investigate to what extent the occupational stress exist among the SMEs employees in Melaka. Based on the Occupational Stress measure of respondents, the descriptive statistical analysis found that the variance of all variables indicated that most respondents are very close to the mean on all the variables. It was found that the mean of Intrinsic to the Job is the lowest score of 2.80 classified as tendencies of highest stress and Role in Organisation is the lowest stress.

#### 6.1.2 Interpretation the Differences among the Demographic factors, Training Needs and Performance Enhancement

The analysis reveals that there is a significant difference in training needs between male and female employees. The result shows the most training needs influence based on this finding is from male with mean classified as the highest score. Similarly, there is also a significant difference in performance enhancement between male and female employee. The result shows the highest mean score of performance enhancement influence is from female. It can be concluded that female employees needs more training than male employees.

The analysis shows that there is a significant difference in training needs between married and single employees. This indicates that single employees need less training than married employees. There is also a significant difference in performance enhancement between married and single employees. This result shows that the performance of single employees is lesser than what been achieved by the married employees. Therefore, the performance of single employees should be enhanced.

In company size, the analysis reveals that there is a significant difference in training needs between the employees of small and medium size company. It is concluded that the employees of medium size company need more training than the employees of small size company. For instance, there is also a significant difference in performance enhancement between the employees of small size company and medium size company. The result shows the performance of small size company employees is higher than the medium size company employees. So that, this shows that the employees' performance of medium size company should be further enhanced.

There is a significant difference in training needs between the employees who feel of looking for other job and employees who do not feel looking for other job due to occupational stress. The result shows that employees who do not feel looking for other job due to occupational

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stress is higher. There is also a significant difference in performance enhancement between the employees who feel of looking for other job due to occupational stress. The result shows the most performance enhancement influence is from who feel of looking for other job due to occupational stress.

There is no significant difference in the training needs between the relationship of current and previous work of employees as well as for the performance enhancement. Thus, it can be concluded that the previous working experience does not effect to the training needs and performance enhancement of current job.

The result indicates that the highest mean scores is the age of 18 – 30 years employees. It shows that the employee of age 51 years and above needs more training. Whereas, in performance enhancement, it has resulted that the highest mean scores is the age of 18 – 30 years employees compared to the age of 41 – 50 years employees as the lowest mean scores in this study It shows that the performance of employees of the age of 41 – 50 years should be enhanced.

In the training needs tendencies, it shows that “others” class of the employees race scores highest mean as compared to Indian employees. It shows that the Indian employees also needs training as well as enhancing their performance enhancement as the highest mean scores for performance enhancement is the Chinese employees compared to Indian employees. Therefore, it can be concluded that training needs and performance enhancement should be focus more on the Indian employees.

The analysis reveals that the highest mean scores is the Manager Position of employees compared to Senior Executive Position as the lowest mean scores in this study in training needs tendencies. However, it shows that the Senior Executive position/job title needs more training compared to other position. In the performance enhancement, the highest mean scores is the Manager position of employees compared to the Senior Manager position of employees as the lowest mean scores in this study (It shows that the Senior Manager position needs to enhance their performance.

In relation to the qualification that the employees are holding, the analysis shows that the highest mean scores for employees holding the Diploma compared to employees holding PhD the lowest mean scores in this study in training needs tendencies. It shows that the employees that holding PhD needs more trainings. However, in relation to the performance enhancement, highest mean scores is the employees holding Degree compared to the employees holding SPM Certificate as the lowest mean scores in this study This means that employees holding the SPM Certificate should have to enhance further their performance.

The highest mean scores is the employees who work 15 – 19 years compared to employees work less than 5 years as the lowest mean scores in this study It shows that the employees who work less than 5 years need more training. In the performance enhancement, the analysis shows that the highest mean scores is employees who work for less than 5 years employees compared to employees work for 10 – 14 years as the lowest mean scores in this study. It shows that employees work for 10 – 14 years need to enhance their performance.

### **6.1.3 Interpretation of Relationship between Occupational Stress Factors and Training Needs and Performance Enhancement**

The correlations analysis with simple Pearson correlation coefficients shows that occupational stress factors have a large positive correlation with training needs at .85 ( $p < 0.01$ ). However, the linear relationship of occupational stress and performance enhancement is not strong at .15 ( $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, it can be concluded that the occupational stress factors could contribute in developing the employees training needs. However, even though the performance enhancement does not contribute with high correlation with occupational stress but they do correlated. This can be concluded that there is a weak relationship between occupational stress factors and performance enhancement.

### **6.1.4 The Best predictors among the Occupational Stress Factors on Training Needs**

Based on the values reported in the table, the highest beta coefficient is .43, which derives from Organizational Structure. This means that Organizational Structure is the strongest contributor to the overall equation ( $\beta = .43$ ). This variable is followed by Relationship at Work ( $\beta = .31$ ). However, predictors of Role in Organization ( $\beta = -.38$ ) and Career Development ( $\beta = -.30$ ) to be excluded as they are not significant predictors in this model. To conclude, the multiple regression models for training needs in standard score units are as follows:

$$\text{Training Needs} = 43 (\text{Organizational Structure}) + .31 (\text{Relationship at Work})$$

This model suggests that the overall training needs of employees could be enhanced significantly by improving the training needs based on the Organizational Structure and Relationship at Work variables as these two predictors would play a very important role for the company to identify the areas of training that are the most lacking. Therefore, the employees would be given a proper or the right trainings that suit their needs. In view to this, the data analysis portray the true findings of the study that was carried out and shows the importance of analyzing the training needs. This is supported by Leigh et. al. (2000) who stressed on the importance of assessing and analysing needs because this stage builds the foundation by identifying the kinds of HRD intervention needed for an effective effort.

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Organizational structure variables are consist of three main areas that specialization, formalization and centralization. This includes the explicit of job description, rules and procedures on the work process, autonomy, specialized requirement and flexibility of the procedure on the employees' behaviors. Whereas, the relationship at work factors or variables consists of teamwork, appreciation, superior, colleague, support and office politics. Good relationships with colleagues at the workplace may reduce work-related stress, increase job satisfaction and commitment and reduce intention to leave (Currivan, 1999).

### 6.1.5 The Best Predictors among the Occupational Stress Factors on Performance Enhancement

The linear relationship of occupational stress and performance enhancement is not strong as compared with training needs. However, it shows that performance enhancement decreased when the employees occupationally stressed.

### 6.2 Interpretation of Hypothesis

The T-Test was used to test the differences between gender, marital status company size, looking for other job due to occupational stress and relationship of current and previous working experience. Whereas, the Anova Test was designed to test the differences between Age, Race, Position/Job Title, Education and Length of Service. The results from the two test shows that there are significant differences among them except for the question of relationship of current and previous working experience that show no difference. The correlations analysis with simple Pearson correlation coefficients test was used in these tests. Hypothesis 2 and 3 dealt with the relationship between Occupational Stress Factors to Training Needs and Occupational Stress Factors to Performance Enhancement. The results show that these hypotheses can be validated and has positive relationships in both tests. The stepwise multiple regression tests was used in Hypothesis 4 to Hypothesis 8, the results show that the predictor variables for the best predictor of Occupational Stress Factors on Training Needs are Organizational Structure (beta =.43) and Relationship at Work (beta =.37). However, none of the performance enhancement variables contributed as the predictor of Occupational Stress.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The results indicate that there is a positive correlation between all the occupational stress factors on training needs and performance enhancement SMEs' employees in Melaka. Thus, all the occupational stress factors are correlated and could be used in developing training needs development and the performance enhancement of employees. The findings revealed that the Intrinsic to the Job factors were the greatest sources of occupational stress to SMEs' employees. The Stepwise Multiple Regression Test revealed that the best predictors of Occupational Stress Factors on Training Needs are Organizational Structure and Relationship at

Work. Occupational stress does affect an individual's ability to address workplace challenges.

### 7.1 Recommendation for Future Research

Future research should develop a thorough survey by using qualitative research or mixed methods, so that the findings would be most accurate as the variables cover all the respondents' perspectives. The structure of SMEs' companies varies tremendously. It is recommended that incorporating with other variables that ought to improve the explaining power in the variance of performance enhancement. It is interesting to consider other related variables that can be the potential mediators of performance enhancement. This can influence the strength of the desired relationship and further strengthen the framework. There are also more avenues for occupational training needs in the organization need to be identified and developed. In addition to the recommendations for future research, the third recommendation is to replicate this study in other context but to integrate the area or occupational stress, training needs and performance enhancement in Human Resource Development perspective especially in human capital. Finally, future research should also consider measuring the performance of the company through a certain mechanism that could proof that the SMEs' made profits by using their financial performance data based on secondary sources.

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