

**INFLUENCE OF STRESS TOWARDS PROJECT PERFORMANCE AMONG
CONTRACTORS**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is recognize whether the stress can influence project performance. As project conditions nowadays is more challenging and mostly full of uncertainty, stress is one of common problem faced by contractors. In order to discover the effect of stress towards project performance, a survey is conducted to identify the presence of stress in a project in the first phase of the project, follow by source of stress and project performance level among a group of contractors. In this research, I will present the result of the research to prove the relationship between stress and project performance.

ABSTRAKS

Tujuan kajian ini dijalankan adalah untuk mengenal pasti pengaruh stress terhadap prestasi projek. Keadaan projek kini amat mencabar di mana ketidakpastian di dalam projek berlaku secara kerap, stress merupakan salah satu masalah yang sering dihadapi oleh kontraktor. Bagi mengenal pasti kesan stress terhadap prestasi projek, satu survey telah dijalankan dimana soal selidik tersebut merangkumi elemen-elemen seperti kehadiran stress, punca stress dan tahap prestasi projek di antara sekumpulan kontraktor. Di dalam kajian ini, saya akan membentangkan hasil kajian untuk membuktikan hubungan antara stress dan prestasi projek.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In today's world, challenge is often higher and greater from the past. The situation always gives the new ling a giant test before they can proceed with another. Even the people who have spent a long time in a specific field has a problem in cope on with the today's fast changing and advance technology. Fast changing circumstance creates uncertainty. Uncertainty means more risk to be considered and create stress towards people who involve with the uncertainty. Stress in not necessarily bad. It can be a good factor than can enhance company performance. Many people do not realize that the stress influence them on daily basis. In some cases, stress can be a booster that can enhance an individual or a company performance. In most of the cases, stress proves itself to be a disaster where the performance of an individual or a company can be worse and worse. A good stress is needed while bad stress need to be avoid to make a company or an individual perform better in today's world circumstance.

Project performance is also can be known as project objective. A good project performance means the project manager able to deliver product according to project requirement make by the customer via client. In other word, project performance can be measure by using requirement provided by the client. Failure to fulfill the customer requirement would lead to project delivery failure, which can cause a company loss profit

gain from the project. According to certain contract, failure to deliver project with its requirement make the contractor paid the price and the loss occur to customer.

1.2 PROBLEM BACKGROUND

Mental disorder involve stress could be dangerous if not manage with care. In Sweden, one of two factors that contribute to long-term sick leave is stress where this circumstance causes grave impact and burden to society, companies and organization (Statistic Sweden, 2010). Based on the situation above, we can determine stress can be catastrophic. Moreover, in Sweden we found that structural changes in 1990s cause decrease of workforce in Sweden where the number of employee in 1992 is 1.6 million to 1.3 million in 2001 (Statistic Sweden, 2008). The rapid changes in workforce will not only affect management of human service, but also the performances and daily tasks within organization (Herting, Nilsson, Theorell, & US, 2004). In other word, downsizing of workforce would affect a project greatly; which can lead to project failure. With the decrease of workforce in Sweden, long-term sick leave continue to increase where psychosocial stress in work place is recognize as main contributor to the increasing of sick leave (Stefansson, 2006). Even though the sick leave amount has decrease slightly, stress problems continue to become major reason for long-term sick leave and decrease in productivity (Statistic Sweden, 2011). Our finding from previous report states that stress disorder more common among woman working in human service company (Fronteira & Ferrinho, 2011) (Leijon, 2004).

A study shows that reduced working capacity is one of solution for long-lasting sickness and absence where that person may score high in stress instrument test (Ahola, 2008). Decreased workforce due to medical condition will lead to productivity loss that will increase the hidden costs in organization and company, long or short period perspective (Stewart, 2003). As a result, it is clear that stress can reduce, or worst, cause productivity loss that may lead to project failure. In a project, it is vital to maintain workforce throughout the project because once the workforce decrease, the capability of the team or performance will decrease. When the workforce capability decreases, the project performance will also decrease. Other than that, time limitation, financials problem, workload and interpersonal difficulties with project members as well as other factors contribute a significant stress impact (Rocha-Singh, 1994). Which mean other problem in a project may also cause stress that can cause productivity loss. It is important

to increase the percentage of project success by knowing the type of stress involve in the project and how the stress can be reduce. According to some researches, job stress is one of popular research because of its influence toward critical job outcomes, for example performance and employee well-being (Cooper & Marshall, 1976) (Ganster, 1982). Moreover there is more research that has focused in identify strategies to cope with stress in work-related stress studies (Keaveney & Nelson, 1993) (Oakland & Ostell, 1996). In solving the work-related stress, some of researchers suggested and investigated problem focused and emotional focused coping strategies (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) (Strutton & Lumpkin, 1994). Other suggest by political strategies such as influence techniques (Deluga, 1989) (Nonis, 1996). There is also researcher that suggest by using psychological coping strategies, for example motivation orientation, role benefits and psychological withdrawal (Keaveney & Nelson, 1993).

Other than all the method and strategies above, there is a strategy where it can reduce the stress influence in project performance significantly. The strategy is time management. There are vast reports regarding the positive impacts of time management as in (Macan, 1994) and (Schuler, 1979). It is also belief that effective time management lower stress level, produce more efficient, satisfied and healthier employee and therefore produce more effective company or organization as in (Cooper & Marshall, 1976), (Ganster, 1982) and (Schuler, 1979).

Even though it is belief that the time management has significant effect toward stress, there is scarce evidence to support the claim of time management (Macan, 1994). In reaction towards evidence scarcity, some researcher suggested that time management is “the area in most need of research at the individual unit analysis” (Bluedorn & Denhardt, 1988). In other word, it is vital to find a method to evaluate time management as a coping strategy towards stress. Based on above research, it is known that stress can give a significant and devastates effect toward project through productivity loss and mental ill health condition that would make us loss capacity of our workforce, and then make our project paralyses form achieving its objectives. It is also being known that there is several strategies which can reduce stress to its minimum which can boost motivation of our employees and lead them to healthier employee.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

A project can be risky. There is one of knowledge area in project management that is known as risk management. Stress is one of critical risk that can destroy the success of a project. According to our findings, stress causes the number of workforce in Sweden to reduce at significant amount (Statistic Sweden, 2008). The reduce workforce also can be defined as reduce of productivity level. The increase of psychosocial stress makes sick leave increase greatly, which can cause the productivity loss. The situation would become worst because according to our previous findings, many of stress victims involve woman (Fronteira & Ferrinho, 2011) (Leijon, 2004).

Some of past researches suggest that to reduce stress, one of solution is to reduce work capacity of a person that having stressed (Ahola, 2008). But in project, if we reduce working force capacity, we might not be able to deliver the finishing goods according to time given. If we ask for extension of time, we may need to pay fine or liquidation loss as compensation not to be able to fulfill project requirement. In triple constraint of project management we have 3 elements. Two of them are time and resource. According to past research, time limitation and inadequate resource can be source of stress (Rocha-Singh, 1994). In order to avoid stress influence toward project performance, it is suggested that a project is prepare with risk management planning to countermeasure the unknown risk cause by time and resource. When time constraint become more pressure than usual, the employee may demoralize and loss their productivity. Hence it is important to identify strategies as countermeasure against work related stress (Oakland & Ostell, 1996). Moreover, when we identify the strategies that can prevent stress from affecting project performance, we can apply it to project to make sure that stress in the project do not cause the employee to loss their productivity (Keaveney & Nelson, 1993). Planning in the project mostly involve time management, it is said that a good time management can reduce stress (Macan, 1994). If employees feel that they have enough time to complete their work, therefore they can do their best in the work without worries (Schuler, 1979).

The aim of this study is first to identify source of stress involve in a project among contractor and identify the effect of stress towards project performance. Other than that,

the purpose of this study to propose a strategy that can reduce the influence of stress towards project performance.

1.4 SIGNIFICANT OF THE STUDY

Knowledge

The significant of the study is to explain and describe the source of stress to contractor in relation to project performance. Other than that, the study also discusses method to measure and technique to handle stress in the project management perspective. The study also discuss about severity effect of stress towards project performance.

Practice

It is important for a project manager to practice correct and appropriate stress handling method. Failure handle stress not only cause delay to project, but also leads to project failure. Without in-depth knowledge about method and technique to handle stress, the project performance will tend to decrease that finally lead to failure to deliver the finishing goods.

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study:

- To identify source of stress among contractors
- To identify effect of stress towards project performance

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study shall answer the following research questions:

- What types source of stress involve in project?
- How the stress can affect project performance?
- What is the effect cause by stress towards project performance?

1.7 RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

- H_0 : There is no relationship between source of stress and project performance
- H_a : There is a relationship between source of stress and project performance

1.8 RESEARCH DEFINITION

Key Term	Definition
Stress	Any object that produce a challenge or threat to one's well-being
Source of stress	A stimulus that cause human to feel stress
Project performance	A measure to determine whether the requirement of a project owner is fulfill
Contractor	Contractor refers to individual or company that make a contract to complete a project for another organization

1.9 SCOPE OF STUDY

The scope of this study will explore the relationship between the source of the stress and project performance among contractor in Bangi, Selangor. The objective of the study is to identify what kind of stress involve in the project, identify the effect of stress towards project performance that might happen when a project is influence by stress and the best practice in order to prevent stress from affecting project performance. We will conduct this study in Bangi, Selangor. 50 respondents involve all contractor in Bangi, Selangor Pahang will be chosen randomly. Our respondent are contractors from various class, class A to class F, from Bangi, Selangor. We will collect data by distribute questionnaire to all selected respondents.

1.10 EXPECTED RESULT

The expected result of this study is to identify whether there is a relationship between source of stress and project performance or not. As we can see in the past research, in Sweden for example the main reason for long term sick leave is primary because of work related stress (Statistic Sweden, 2010). Even though the number of sick leave was reduced, stress still remains as top contributor for the sick leave (Statistic Sweden, 2011). By carry out this study, we hope to find out how the stress can affect a project performance. We also hope that we can find out the solution for project manager to avoid stress from affecting their project. In a project, rapid changes involving the changes of sizes in workforce will greatly affect a project, where if the workforce is decrease in size, the capacity of the project team may decrease greatly and leads to productivity loss (Herting, Nilsson, Theorell, & US, 2004). During this study, we may encounter different type of source that contributes to stress. By knowing source of stress, we can produce more effective environment where only good stress is allow. Bad stress often leads to disaster or worst, burnout of employee. If an employee is burnout, he or she wills loss capability to perform work for project. If an employee unable to do work, project manager must find substitute for the employee or place extra burden on existing employees, which can cause stress among employees in that situation. High stress may leads to more employees to burnout, which at worst cause the project to paralyze. More and more employees will burnout, leads to productivity loss which cause hidden cost that sustain by a project sky rocketing in the moment they lost the full capacity of project team (Stewart, 2003). The budget of the project will overrun. When project budget is overrun, the project could be consider as failed, where the project manager will bear all the blame and need to pay the loss or liquidation cost. Other than that, the project manager may need to complete the remaining work with own financial support. Now the project manager will have 2 dilemmas. The first one is he need to pay for liquidation cost. The second one is he need to complete the project with his money. This type of situation is the problem that we try to avoid by solving stress problem.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we will discuss about the definition of stress, source of stress, effect of stress towards project performance and the relationship between stress and project performance. All discussion will be based on relevant academic materials that related to the study.

2.0.1 Stress

Since Weber's concept of bureaucratic structure is introduced, majority of organization follow the concept or copy it in order to form an organization. Nowadays, in order to confront and react towards highly dynamic and technological environment, many organizations have utilized the project organizational structure as their mainframe (French, Kast, & Rosenzweig, 1985). In a project, project manager become main reference for all activities, tasks and information that involve in a project. In a project, the main purpose is to deliver project to its completion according to requirement determined by project owner. There is a huge difference when an organization chooses to implementation of project management approach regarding line of authority and responsibility. The usages of project management form a new and better structure known as matrix organizational structure (Kolodny, 1979). In other word, it is the combination

of traditional bureaucratic approach and autonomous project management approach which leads to a better structure. The advantage of the matrix organization is the matrix organization allows integration in project management.

There are good stress and bad stress. Stress is not only giving the bad impact (French, Kast, & Rosenzweig, 1985). The word stress itself emphasize as neutral in compare with distress and eustress term that is used to show bad and good effects. Some researchers propose a model that show the optimum or balance range of stress in its effect towards project performance. The model stated that if stress level is more than the optimum or balance level of the model, the stress may affect the project performance. The effect described in the model is total burnout of the employee and decrease in performance. Decrease performance may reduce and slow down the project progress, but employee burnout have a catastrophic effect. Burnout employee unable to produce minimum require of performance, where in some cases, result to total loss of productivity. When the productivity decrease the capacity to complete the project also decrease, leads to extension of time and resource addition that may claim a huge cost of money.

Every problem has its root. The stress may be cause by stressor or source of stress. Uncertainty is one of source of stress that commonly known that may result to longer working hour (Gallstedt, 2003). In a project, uncertainty is at the most is in the beginning of the project and at the end of the project. The stress level reaches its peak at the beginning and the end of the project. A condition where the human being produces a response in form of anger or anxiety is also known as stressor or source of stress (Anantharaman & Rajewari, 2003). Time constraint, financial problem, and workload and interpersonal problem with another project team members is also identify as stressor that have catastrophic effect (Rocha-Singh, 1994). The effect of these stressors can be grave especially when related to project management.

Problem is can be picture a padlock where the solution is the key. There are many researchers that suggest many types of strategies in order to counter the stress. For example, utilization of coping strategies, updating managerial and technology skill, network support exploit that make employee easier to get coaching service and access to senior managerial level (Richmond & Skitmore, 2006). Some of researchers suggest that project manager feel more stress than general management because the project manager needs to balance the demands of different stakeholder (Haynes & Love, 2004). In coping

strategies, some research indicate the need to use problem focused and emotional focused coping strategies in order to reduce stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) (Strutton & Lumpkin, 1994). Other researches indicate the utilization of political influence (Deluga, 1989) (Nonis, 1996). Psychological focused coping strategies also suggest in order counteracting against stress, including motivational orientation, role benefit and psychological withdrawal (Keaveney & Nelson, 1993).

2.0.2 Project Performance

Project performance is often describing as ability to fulfill the project owner requirement by deliver a project correctly. Too much optimism can be a reason that leads to project failure (Henderson, 2006). The effect of stress often in hidden cost where an organization without contingency plan pay a high price to solve the stress related problem, result in employee turnover and low job satisfaction (Thong & Yap, 2000). According to (Lim & Teo, 1999), more than half of total turnover in IT industry is cause by stress. Other than that, stress also affecting the workforce of the IT industry, which makes the workforce, pays greatly for productivity (Sethi, King, & Quick, 2004).

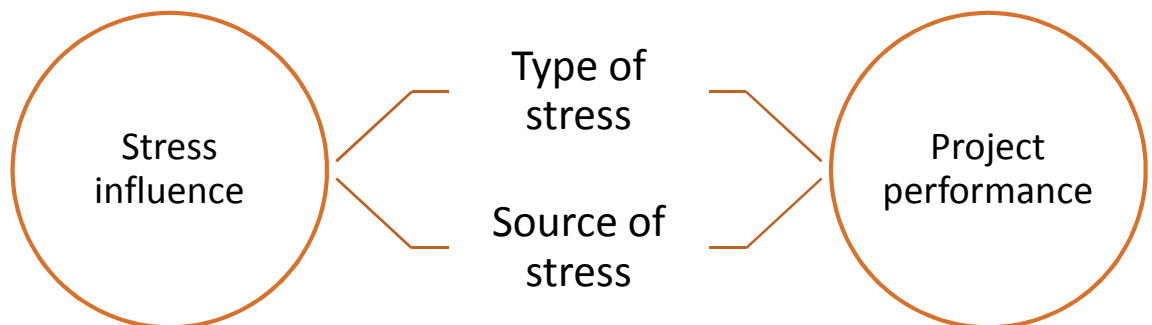
There is a suggestion by a research that job performance cannot be measure for all projects because of project uniqueness (Jiang & Klein, 1999). Each element in every project is different from time to time. In other word, every situation in a project will be different even though the project requirement is same. This is because there is uncertainty and uncontrolled element in every project that remain unknown that make a project different from each other. The definition of project performance can be range from under budget, follow meeting schedules and achieving all indicator predetermine by the project owner (Takagi, Mizuno, & Kikuno, 2005).

Normally, project assessment indicator in a project will involve cost, time, quality, environment, safety and many other indicators that may give significant effect towards project. Moreover, people in recent time are more prioritize comprehensive approach including productivity, risk containment and security (Cha & O'Connor, 2006).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



3.2 INTRODUCTION

A research can be defined as a systematic inquiry that its purpose to attain information in order to figure out a solution for a certain type of problem (Emory & Cooper, 1991). Other definition also refers research as direct a problem toward solution (Emory & Cooper, 1991). Research methodology can be refers as method that we used to

conduct a research. While a case study research methodology can be defined as empirical inquiry that investigate a contemporary phenomenon in its natural context, where the boundaries between phenomena and the context is not clearly proved and using multiple sources of evident (K. Yin, 1984).

In this chapter, we will discuss about the methodology of this study. The chapter also will explain specifically about the method used to carry out this research which also include the research design, the population of the research, the sampling technique used, design of the questionnaire and data analysis which will describe the factor analysis and descriptive statistic.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

In carry out a research, we can use two types of methodology. The first type of methodology is quantitative method. The second type of method is qualitative method. In a research, we require to use neither qualitative nor quantitative method (Creswell, 2003). To measure a phenomenon that we investigate and use statistic to analyze fresh data that we obtained, we will use the quantitative method. To reveal human behavior in their contextual setting, qualitative method is the best method to analyze this type of data.

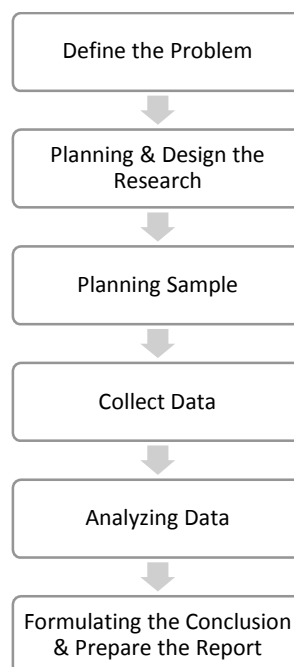
Quantitative method is used to test theory and identify variable involve in the theory, which will be study (Creswell, 2003). Next, we will use the quantitative method for statistical validity and reliability standard which can be perform by statistical procedure in order to analyze data (Creswell, 2003). While the qualitative method is any type of research that produces a result where the result is abstract and cannot be measure by any statistical procedures (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this study, we will use questionnaire survey as our method.

The purpose for the usage of questionnaire is to obtain primary source of data from sample population. The population of the study is unknown; hence non-probability sampling design is used. The convenience sampling of non-probability sampling design is applied for this study. 50 questionnaires are distributed to contractors in Bangi, Selangor. Type of questionnaire that we will use is closed-ended and consists of question divided by category. The closed-ended question is the primary choice because the questions is easy to understand and can be answer quickly by respondent.

The questionnaire is consists of 57 question that can be divided to 4 parts. The first part contain of 4 questions which will cover demographical details. The second part contain of 21 questions that use to detect the presence of stress in respondent. The third part contain of 4 questions that will cover the source of stress in project. The fourth part contains 28 questions that will use to measure the project performance. This study is cross-sectional type study where data is collected once to meet the study objective. After all the data is obtained from the respondents, we will use Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to analyze data.

3.4 RESEARCH PROCESS

Table 1 Research Process



3.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Sampling is the subset of individual on observation in a population of individuals purposely chose to gain certain knowledge about the target population. In general, the probability sampling design can be divided to two main groups; which is probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling design is used when the elements in the population have a known or predetermined chance of being selected as sample. For non-probability sampling design, the elements in the population do not have a known or predetermined chance of being selected as sample. In this study, the sample is selected by using non-probability sampling design where the elements are unknown. The number or respondent target in this study is 50 respondents. The unit of analysis is the individual who participate in our survey. The survey will involve 50 respondents and the number of expected respond will also be 50.

In non-probability sampling design, we choose to apply convenience sampling because of big population and unknown respondent. The usage of non-probability sampling design is applied when the target population has no probability attachment of being chosen as sample. The convenience sampling involves collecting data from members of population who are conveniently available. The convenience sampling method is design to gain information quickly and efficiently.

The population can be defined as an entire group of elements with common characteristics. While the process involves small proportion or subgroup of a population is selected for analysis is known as sampling technique. Sample refers to small group that we can assume to represent a larger population.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

The data collection method apply in this study is survey questionnaire. The questionnaire will be administered personally. By administered personally, the feedback from the respondent can be gain in short period of time. The other reason of applying and administer the questionnaire personally is to clear any doubts from the respondents and enable us to obtain pure and more transparent data, where we can see directly the respondent answer the questionnaire.

3.7 QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

In order to carry out this study, we have adapted few questionnaires to produce a questionnaire. The importance of the questionnaire is to obtain primary source of data from sample population. The questionnaire is developed by refers to model questionnaire from DASS inquiry, (Barreca, 2000) and University Fraser Valley performance evaluation questionnaire. The data is gathered from sample population which is randomly chosen by distribute the questionnaire. The questionnaire then will be collect back as feedback from the respondent. In this study we exploit two types of scale which is first, nominal scale. The second scale is interval scale.

The questionnaire is consists of 57 question that can be divided to 4 parts. The first part contain of 4 questions which will cover demographical details. The second part contain of 21 questions that use to detect the presence of stress in respondent. The third part contain of 4 questions that will cover the source of stress in project. The fourth part contains 28 questions that will use to measure the project performance.

The elements in the questionnaire are measured by using interval scale, which involve arithmetic operation in data collection from sample population. The interval scale is design in formed of five-point scale, also known as Likert scale. Following shows the elements in the Likert scale:

Table 2 Likert Scale

Scale	Description
1	Strongly disagree
2	Disagree
3	Neutral
4	Agree
5	Strongly agree

3.8 STATISTICAL TECHNIQUE

The data retrieved from respondent and then the data will be organized and analyzed. In order to analyze closed-ended questions, we utilize software named Statistical Package for Social Science also known to public as SPSS. By using SPSS software, we can calculate and determine information provided by respondents. Each questionnaire is labeled as J1, J2, and J3 and accordingly to ensure each of the questionnaires has its own identification.

The reliability analysis used for this study is Cronbach's Alpha. The Cronbach's Alpha able to determine whether variables were reliable or vice versa. In general, Cronbach's Alpha with value of 0.7 and above indicate the variable is reliable. In our study, variables are considered reliable if the value of Cronbach's Alpha is 0.5 or higher. In any case the value of Cronbach's Alpha low than 0.5, an item must be deleted to ensure value of Cronbach's Alpha can increase, thus make it more reliable.

Descriptive statistics is collected by frequency of the elements in questionnaire. From the frequency data we obtained, we can produce histogram to picture the frequency, percentage, valid percentage and cumulative percentage of the data. The frequency data also provide us with mean, median and mode. When completely analyze, we able to determine form of range, variance and standard deviation.

CHAPTER 4

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we will discuss about the research with the result of the statistical analysis conducted on data collected from the respondents. The discussion will be structured by profiles of respondents via descriptive statistic, and follow by the result of reliability test analysis. From 70 respondents who is contractor is targeted where the questionnaire is given to them, and only 50 of them reply back with completed questionnaire.

Table 3 Mean, Median and Mode of Demographic Element

Statistics					
		Gender	Age	Education	Experience
N	Valid	50	50	50	50
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		1. 5000	2. 2600	3.20 00	1.820 0
Median		1. 5000	2. 0000	3.00 00	1.000 0
Mode		1. 00 ^a	1. 00	3.00	1.00
Std. Deviation		.5 0508	1. 13946	.989 74	.9189 6

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

Table 4 Frequency of Gender

Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	25	50 .0	50.0	50.0
	Female	25	50 .0	50.0	100.0
	Total	50	10 0.0	100.0	

Table 5 Frequency of Age

Age					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Below 25	16	3 2.0	32.0	32.0
	26 to 35	14	2 8.0	28.0	60.0
	36 to 45	13	2 6.0	26.0	86.0
	46 to 55	5	1 0.0	10.0	96.0
	55 and above	2	4 .0	4.0	100.0
	Total	50	1 00.0	100.0	

Table 6 Frequency of Education

Education					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	PhD	3	6. 0	6.0	6.0
	Master	6	12 .0	12.0	18.0
	Degree	24	48 .0	48.0	66.0
	Diploma	12	24 .0	24.0	90.0
	SPM	5	10 .0	10.0	100.0
	Total	50	10 0.0	100.0	