

REDUCING THE JOB STRESS OF NLAX MARKETING CONSULTING PLT
EMPLOYEES DURING COVID-19

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JANUARY 2022

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A project report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of
the degree of Master of Business Administration.

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JANUARY 2022

DEDICATION

To my dearest father and mother whose scarifies seeded my success. To my beloved families for continuous moral support and encouragement. To my supervisor who guide me so well and to my AR2, AR1 and BR lecturer who helps me a lot.

To everyone who was a light in this journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First, I would like to express our sincere thanks to Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) for allowing me to carry out my research with the various assistance provided such as the facilities, online resources, and the supervisors assigned to guide our research. With the guidance and support from various parties, I managed to complete the project successfully.

Secondly, I would like to show my appreciation to my Action Research supervisor, Dr. Mohamad Shah Bin Kassim and to my Business Research lecturer, Dr. Hishan Shanker Sanil, who willingly sacrificed his valuable time to guide us patiently and provide me with some useful suggestions when I am facing some problems. His guidance and advice have helped me to keep my research on the right track and able to complete my project.

Thirdly, special thanks would like to give to NLAX Marketing Consulting PLT because give me an opportunity and agree to participate in this research project. Besides, I want to express my gratitude to all the respondents who willing to spend their precious time and efforts to answer the questionnaire. Their contribution means a lot to the data collection process. With the cooperation, I managed to gather the questionnaires within a short period, and their response able provides quality data to run for the test and carry out the data analysis.

Lastly, thanks to my family and friends that supported me tirelessly when I was doing this project and for showing their understanding of every situation when I was conducting the research.

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 outbreak is a great reminder that pandemics, as other catastrophes, have occurred previously and will keep on occurring later. This not only has consequences for the economy; all of society is affected directly and indirectly, which has prompted dramatic changes in how businesses act and consumers behavior. This critical issue is a worldwide agenda to address a portion of the pandemic-related issues affecting society and businesses.

During COVID-19 all workers need to work from home, and this can increase job stress and lack of motivation among employees. The decreasing rate of employees' productivity has made management worried. The organizations believed that employee job satisfaction is one of the determinants to examine the job stress level.

The purpose of this action research is to identify problems faced by the employees during WFH that influenced job stress and job satisfaction of NLAX Marketing Consulting PLT employees. At the same time, the research aims to propose training towards employees and give motivation classes to employees as an intervention plan towards the company and hence to evaluate the effectiveness of training towards employees and give motivation classes to employees in the process of reducing job stress among employees in NLAX Marketing Consulting PLT.

There are three applicable and appropriate theories in this action research: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory and two types of models. These three theories/models can help the company's management to understand better about their employee's job stress situation, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. A mixed-method approach applied in this research using interviews, survey, and observation with a total of 20 respondents taking part in this research. Thematic Analysis and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) were used to analyse all the collected data.

Therefore, result shown for the training towards employees and give motivation classes to employees that implemented at NLAX Marketing Consulting PLT found to be significant in Thematic analysis and Independent t Test analysis. Therefore, future researchers are recommended to further investigate the same intervention towards similar research. Besides, this research also recommends to future researcher to refer it as a guide to plan or implement their future strategies.

Keywords: Job Stress, Work From Home (WFH), COVID-19, Training Employees

ABSTRAK

Wabak COVID-19 adalah satu peringatan bahawa pandemik kali ini adalah seperti bencana yang lain yang terjadi sebelum ini atau tetap akan terjadi pada masa akan datang. Ini mendatangkan kesan buruk kepada ekonomi, semua golongan masyarakat terkesan dengannya secara langsung dan tidak langsung, yang membawa perubahan drastik kepada perniagaan dan tingkah laku pelanggan. Isu kritikal ini adalah agenda masalah dunia untuk menyelesaikan isu berkaitan dengan pandemik ini yang memberi kesan kepada dunia dan masyarakat.

Semasa COVID-19, semua pekerja perlu bekerja dari rumah (WFH) dan ini meningkatkan tekanan pekerjaan dan kurang motivasi dalam kalangan pekerja. Kekurangan produktiviti merungsingkan pihak pengurusan. Organisasi percaya bahawa kepuasan pekerjaan adalah salah satu faktor penentu kadar tekanan pekerjaan.

Tujuan penyelidikan tindakan ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti masalah yang dihadapi oleh pekerja semasa WFH yang mempengaruhi faktor tekanan pekerjaan dan kepuasan pekerjaan pekerja NLAX Marketing Consulting PLT. Pada masa sama, kajian bertujuan untuk mencadangkan latihan kepada pekerja dan memberikan kelas motivasi kepada pekerja sebagai langkah intervensi terhadap syarikat. Oleh itu, penilaian keberkesanan latihan kepada pekerja dan memberikan kelas motivasi kepada pekerja dalam proses mengurangkan tekanan pekerjaan dalam kalangan pekerja NLAX Marketing Consulting PLT.

Terdapat 3 teori yang sesuai yang boleh digunakan dalam penyelidikan tindakan ini iaitu; Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory dan 2 lagi jenis model. Ketiga-tiga teori/model dapat membantu pihak pengurusan syarikat untuk memahami dengan lebih baik tentang situasi pekerja mereka terutamanya dalam era COVID-19 ini. Kaedah campuran yang diaplikasikan dalam kajian ini adalah temubual, soal selidik, dan pemerhatian. Terdapat 20 orang responden ambil bahagian untuk terlibat dalam kajian ini. Analisis Tematik dan Pakej Statistik untuk Sains Sosial (SPSS) digunakan untuk analisa semua data.

Oleh itu, keputusan menunjukkan bahawa latihan kepada pekerja dan memberikan kelas motivasi kepada pekerja yang di laksanakan di NLAX Marketing Consulting PLT mempunyai signifikan di dalam Analisis Tematik dan t test. Pengkaji akan datang perlu mengkaji lebih terperinci kaedah intervensi terhadap kajian ini. Selain itu, kajian ini juga menyarankan kepada pengkaji akan datang untuk merujuk kajian ini sebagai rujukan untuk penyelesaian akan datang.

Kata Kunci: Tekanan Pekerjaan, Kerja dari Rumah, Latihan Pekerja , COVID-19

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

WFH	-	Work from Home
HR	-	Human Resource
JS	-	Job Stress

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Employee is the most essential part of the business. Employee is an individual who was hired by an employer to do a specific job. Every task needs to be settled a certain period given by their employer. Every employee has their own performance target to measure their productivity. Every employee needs to achieve their target set by their own employer to make sure their job and bonus is secured.

Employee productivity is a metric that measured based on the amount of work done by the employee or output on a project versus the amount of time it takes. Different company have different metric to measure their own employees. It can also be measured and examined by putting it against a standard or “base” of productivity for a group of workers doing similar work. Measure employee productivity will show how efficient the employees are for a given task or project. This metric itself can be used to determine certain number of employees needed for a project.

1.1 COVID-19

COVID-19 is a current pandemic outbreak that has cause a worldwide health crisis in most countries in the worldwide whether big or small country. If look back in history, there has been a long history of pandemic outbreaks. The discussion has not focused or expecting on whether there will be an outbreak, but when new outbreaks

will happen (Stöhr & Esveld, 2004). The phenomenon that leads to this influenza pandemics are recurring biological phenomena and cannot realistically be prevented. Pandemics seem to occur at 10–50-year intervals as a result of the emergence of new virus sub types from virus re-assortment (Potter, 2001). When world population increases steadily, it is likely to be transfer of new viruses from animals to the human population will occur even more frequently soon. Government needs to take measurement action in order to prevent so that they are able to act quickly once suspect an outbreak. We should also try to learn from the history of pandemic outbreaks to prepare our people if this happens again.

The COVID-19 outbreak has constrained many companies' big businesses to close, prompting an uncommon change of disturbance in trade and supply chain in the most of industry segment. Retailers and brands face some short-term difficulties, for example, those identified with health and security, the labor force, revenue income, customer behavior and demands, and marketing. In any case, effectively overcoming these difficulties will not ensure a promising future, or any future at all. This is on the facts that once we get past this pandemic, we will arise in a totally different world contrasted with the one preceding before this. Numerous business sectors, particularly in the fields of the tourism and travel industry and hospitality, at this point don't longer exist. Organizations, particularly new start-ups, have executed an indefinite hiring freeze. Most of start-ups are now facing internal problems from their employees to sustain the job stress equally as they all are working from home.

1.2 Case Company/Institutional Information

1.2.1 Background of Organization

NLAX Marketing Consulting PLT is start-up company located in Johor Bahru. It was uniquely named because to highlight the uniqueness of the company in the marketing field. NLAX Marketing Consulting PLT has been in operation since 2017, starting with 4 employees. NLAX Marketing Consulting PLT has planning to open branch in their 3 years future planning. The company is leads by its Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the founder, Mr. Ng Hock Seng and the co-founder, Mr. Ong Jia Eek who is currently the Head of Human Resource. In 2018, they started their business in the marketing consultation and online business. They do marketing consultation based on the client's company business. Human Resource department is part of Admin Division of NLAX Marketing Consulting PLT. This department is believed to be the heart of NLAX. The HR department is head by co-founder, Mr. Ong Jia Eek. There are 5 staffs in this department.

1.2.2 PESTEL Analysis

As according to Planellas and Muni (2019), PESTEL analysis characterized as investigation to assess the important factors that occur in the financial and business climate that may influence the achievement or failure of future advancement of business. PESTEL analysis comprises of a couple of variables which are political, financial, social, and cultural, technological, environmental and legal. The environment analysis would be later classified as opportunities or threat, and industry analysis would be determined as strength and weaknesses. Later it can be produced as a structured SWOT analysis.

Factors	Facts	Opportunities	Threat
Economic	Economic downturn due to outbreak of COVID-19 (Casadio, Chung, and Williams, 2020)		/
Technological	Embrace new technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT) to improve production capabilities (“Electrical and Electronics,” n.d.)	/	
Environment/ Global	Effects on global business & supply chain (Donthu, N,2020)		/

Table 1.1: PESTEL Analysis

Source: Author

Based on PESTEL analysis above, on economic factor, economic downturn due to outbreak of COVID-19 relates with NLAX which they must close office and start learning to work from home. This is a threat for NLAX because they need to fully operate within online environment.

On technological factor, company embraces new technologies such as Internet of Things (IoT) to improve production capabilities. This relates with NLAX employee’s situation currently which they are fully using software applications to complete all their tasks given.

For environment/global factor part, there is a threat for supply chain around the world. There are some of NLAX supplier are disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.2.3 Internal Analysis

Internal analysis is a way to define the internal competencies and weaknesses of an organization. According to Sammut-Bonnici and Galea, (2015), the role of internal analysis is to evaluate and diagnose the internal resources and capabilities of the organization and create a competitive advantage. There are factors in internal analysis such as culture, management, marketing, research and development, and management information systems. Using this internal analysis, company does have a bigger picture of the position of the company. From this analysis too, we can draw out a SWOT analysis to plan strategy on the company business plan.

Factors	Facts	Strength	Weakness
Management	Lack of training to face online working environment		/
Management	Lack of motivation among employee		/
Production/Operation	Employee low productivity		/
Production/Operation	Online marketing still can be done	/	
Finance	Low liability	/	

Table 1.2: Internal Analysis

Source: Author

Based on the table, one of the strengths found is NLAX Marketing Consulting PLT can still focus on their online marketing segment. They are not affected by the

COVID-19 compared to offline marketing segment which involves physical marketing such as billboards and banner which directly affected by COVID-19. Company also has low liability because of their low rental for office. Therefore, company still can have their positive cash flow and generate their income through main operation.

However, one of the weaknesses found in the internal analysis is low productivity from employees who are working from home during COVID-19. In addition, lack of motivation from employees of NLAX during COVID-19 and high workload during COVID-19. These weaknesses brought a serious impact to the company.

NLAX faces problems with its employees' job stress because have to working online from home due to COVID-19. Further discussion will be on the next chapter.

1.3 Problematic Situation and Problem Formulation

1.3.1 Problem Statement

Social distancing is a must to prevent and contain the virus, different governments around the world have execute strict regulations and restrictions on which businesses can stay open, leading to the distinction between “essential” and “non-essential” businesses (Jiang, 2020). In addition, a new class of businesses is emerging and opening, referred to as “non-essential essentials” (e.g., jewellers and dentists), which are expected to remain open but stand empty without customers (Crabb, 2020).

During Covid-19 pandemic, one of the major problems that face by employees of NLAX Marketing Consulting PLT is job stress. Starting March 2020, NLAX

Marketing Consulting PLT are implementing the “Work from Home”. The employees must work online from their home for the first time, and they have to divide their time in home for families and work.

Through the interview with the head of HR Department of NLAX Marketing Consulting PLT. Management has reviewed all relevant data and information, so they have a clear picture on what is the problems faced by their employees. Therefore, it became a severe concern towards NLAX Marketing Consulting PLT, and later showing a signal where the organization had a loss of productivity and revenue.

As a result, the low productivity among employee and lack of motivation among employee represent a significant loss towards company. The following chapter will further discuss more specifically on how the factors and issues were influencing low productivity and lack of motivation among the employees in the company.

Hence, the suggested and recommended solution will be provided to improve employee productivity in NLAX Marketing Consulting PLT.

1.3.2 SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis is drawn through the evaluation of internal and external analysis. The internal analysis consists of strengths and weaknesses. At the same time, the external environment analysis consists of opportunities and threats. The objective of SWOT analysis is to analyse the internal and external environment and hence formulate best way towards company progress.

Strengths		Opportunities	
S1	Online marketing still can be done	O1	Embrace new technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT) to improve production capabilities

S2	Low liability	O2	
Weaknesses		Threats	
W1	Lack of motivation among employee	T1	Economic downturn due to outbreak of COVID-19
W2	Employee low productivity	T2	Effects on global business & supply chain

Table 1.3: SWOT Analysis for NLAX Marketing Consulting PLT

Source: Author

1.4 Research Question and Objective

1.4.1 Research Question

- What is the main problem and factors that are being faced by employees in NLAX Marketing Consulting PLT due to working online from home during COVID-19?

- What is the solution to help employee with their WFH and reduce job stress in NLAX Marketing Consulting PLT during COVID-19?

1.4.2 Research Objective

- To identify whether NLAX Marketing Consulting PLT employee job stress is due to working online from home during COVID-19.

- To give solution by identifying online training/tutorial or online applications to help with NLAX Marketing Consulting PLT employee to WFH and reduce job stress.

1.5 Importance Of The Proposed Research

1.5.1 Theoretical

The issue of employee well-being has been recognized and well-known as a important & significant issue for employees, employers and society (Deloitte, 2017; REBA, 2019). Furthermore, if any company tackle this particular issue efficiently it can achieve competitive advantage. It is a fundamental consideration for how organizations with growing evidence suggesting that employee well-being is linked to various performance metrics measurement, including productivity, employee turnover, job satisfaction, job stress and work–life balance (e.g. Bakker and Oerlemans, 2011; Keeman et al., 2017). The researchers had given solution to reduce job stress.

As for theoretical contribution, this research reviewed the main theories to support the problems faced by the employees. There are three applicable and appropriate theories in this action research. Findings presented Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs theory and two types of models. Other than that, it not only relates to employee overall well-being and life satisfaction (Bowling et al., 2010) but also affects health care at the national level (Goh et al., 2015). New problems emerged are faced by the employee during COVID-19 as they have to work remotely and working from home (WFH). The increase of job stress can be identified among the employees.

Based on the interview with management and survey conducted with respondents, insightful information and data have been successfully gathered from the employees’ point of view to understand the causes of low productivity and lack of motivation among employees. Finally, the intervention and recommendation has been given to the company to solve the problems. This research can be used as guidance and reference to the future researcher in similar topic.

1.5.2 Practical

In this current pandemic, everyone needs to adapt to ‘new normal’ life. Therefore, every employee does not face normal problems anymore, because they all have been working from home and working remotely. The employee might predetermine and evaluate the factors that might be the cause of their low productivity and lack of motivation among them. Furthermore, it is significant and important to investigate the reason behind the problems faced by the employees. Hence, the primary outcome of the research is to identify the present problems faced by NLAX Marketing Consulting PLT employee. Throughout the interview and data collection, data analysis showed that problems faced by employee are low productivity, lack of motivation and high workload during this crisis. Thus, the questionnaire results obtained from the employees formed an alternative to improve the current situation. Lastly, a proper implementation can be drawn and applied to assist the company management to resolve the problems.

Following this research, company can decrease jobs stress and increase job satisfaction among their employees. Thus, productivity and performance among employee improved. A detailed of relevant study will be discussed in Chapter 2, hence, a framework will develop with the related articles.

The intervention plan proposed in this research expected to be a reference towards other company or organization. The problems can be solved straight away and initiate a prevention action or intervention to reduce job stress among employees.

1.6 Chapter Layout

Throughout Chapter 1, every aspect of this research is known. Chapter 1 consists of research overview, information of case organization PESTEL analysis,

problem situation, SWOT analysis. Then, followed by the research question and research objectives, the importance of the proposed research, chapter layout, and summary of the chapter.

In Chapter 2, it provides the case description and also problem diagnosis in the company. Review of previous studies, theory and framework models involved in Chapter 2.

Next is Chapter 3. In this chapter, it consist of research methodology which included on the philosophy of research, research design, the purpose of study, time horizon, unit analysis, degree of involvement, population and sampling, data collection method, validity, reliability test and last but not least the summary of the chapter.

1.7 Summary of Chapter

In summary, the problems faced by NLAX Marketing Consulting PLT employee have been discovered in this chapter. There is a low productivity and lack of motivation detected among the employee of NLAX Marketing Consulting PLT during this COVID-19, internally. It affects the company performances overall.

This research study could identify factors that causes the low productivity and lack of motivation among employees in NLAX Marketing Consulting PLT during this COVID-19 through interview session and survey. A more detailed and comprehensive of literature review from previous related studies will develop in Chapter 2.

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