THE STUDY OF EMPLOYEES' STRESS ON JOB PERFORMANCE IN FIVE-STAR HOTELS IN BANGKOK

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study were to identify types of work stress that front-line employees of five-star hotels encounter, how work stress affects front-line employees' job performance, how front-line employees evaluate stress management programs of their hotels if applicable, and how front-line employees cope with work stress. Data were collected through 58 questionnaires and 15 key informant's interviews from five five-star hotels in Bangkok. The results showed that the major work stress reported in hotels was related to the job and the guest. Moreover, most of hotel staffs stated that work stress negatively influenced their job performance in both task and contextual ways, such as inability to perform the job well and being unmotivated to work. On the other hand, there was no report of stress management programs in these hotels, however, there were activities like staff events and knowledge/skill trainings provided to employees which were perceived to be effective in reducing employees' stress. Nonetheless, the highest scored practices were related to work condition policies. Thus, it is suggested that hotel management should focus on work stress caused by work characteristics. Furthermore, the implementation of actual stress management programs should be carried out as well as skill/knowledge trainings in order to reduce employees' stress effectively.

KEY WORDS: WORK STRESS / JOB PERFORMANCE / STRESS
                          MANAGEMENT/ COPING STYLE

67 pages

การศึกษาเกี่ยวกับความเครียดที่มีต่อผลการปฏิบัติงานของพนักงานโรงแรมห้าดาวในกรุงเทพฯ
THE STUDY OF EMPLOYEES' STRESS ON JOB PERFORMANCE IN FIVE-STAR HOTELS
IN BANGKOK

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บทคัดย่อ
งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาชนิดของความเครียดเกี่ยวกับงานที่พนักงานส่วนหน้า
ของโรงแรมห้าดาวประสบ   อีกทั้งเพื่อศึกษาผลกระทบของความเครียดเกี่ยวกับงานต่อผลการปฏิบัติงาน
ของพนักงานส่วนหน้า วิธีประเมินการจัดการความเครียดของโรงแรม และวิธีจัดการความเครียดเกี่ยวกับ
งานของพนักงานส่วนหน้า โดยเก็บข้อมูลจากการเก็บแบบสอบถาม 58 ชุด และการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึก 15 คน
จากพนักงานส่วนหน้าของโรงแรมห้าดาวจำนวนห้าโรงแรมในกรุงเทพฯ จากผลการวิจัยพบว่าความเครียด
เกี่ยวกับงานส่วนใหญ่มาจากตัวงานและผู้ใช้บริการโรงแรม อีกทั้งพนักงานส่วนมากรายงานว่าความเครียด
เกี่ยวกับงานมีผลในทางลบต่อการปฏิบัติงานของพวกเขาทั้งในด้านตัวงานและสภาพแวดล้อมของงาน เช่น
การที่ไม่สามารถปฏิบัติงานได้ดี หรือรู้สึกไม่มีแรงจูงใจในการทำงาน ในทางกลับกัน ไม่มีการรายงานว่า
โรงแรมไหนมีมาตรการจัดการความเครียดอย่างแท้จริง อย่างไรก็ตาม โรงแรมเหล่านี้ก็มีกิจกรรมต่างๆเช่น
การจัดงานสังสรรค์ให้พนักงาน   และการฝึกอบรมทักษะความรู้ ซึ่งได้รับการประเมินจากพนักงานว่ามี
ประสิทธิภาพในการความลดความเครียด แม้กระนั้น ผลจากข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณได้ชี้ให้พบว่านโยบายที่มี
ประสิทธิในการลดความเครียดมากที่สุดคือนโยบายที่เกี่ยวกับสภาพแวดล้อมของงาน ดังนั้น จากผลงาน
การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีข้อเสนอแนะว่า   ทางโรงแรมควรเน้นจัดการลักษณะของตัวงานที่ก่อให้เกิดความเครียดแก่
พนักงาน นอกจากนี้ ทางโรงแรมควรจะมีมาตรการจัดการความเครียดที่มีประสิทธิภาพ โดยเฉพาะนโน
บายที่ช่วยส่งเสริมสภาวะงานให้ดีขึ้น รวมถึง การฝึกอบรมต่างๆก็ควรมีการจัดอย่างต่อเนื่อง เพราะมีผลต่อ
ระดับความเครียดที่ลดลง รวมถึงการปฏิบัติงานของพนักงานที่ดีขึ้นด้วย

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Several studies have showed that stressful work situations are related to poor individual well-being and increase health risks like muscle tension, headaches, high blood pressure, and heart disease (Sonnentag & Bayer, 2005; Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Ganster & Schaubroeck, 1991). However, not only physical problems, individual who experiences stressful work circumstances tend to undergo psychological illness such as anxiety, depression, and mental disorder as well (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007; De Lange, Taris, Kompier, Houtman, & Bongers, 2003). Behavioral and emotional changes of individuals may easily be seen during these tough times in life. Furthermore, some studies have confirmed that work-related stress potentially decrease the quality of performance, productivity, and a person's ability to learn (Beehr, Jex, Stacey, & Murrey, 2000; LePine, Podsakoff, & Lepine, 2005). Therefore, stress can be regarded as a serious issue for both individuals and organizations.

Workplace stress can come from various kinds of sources, for instance, company policies, job demands, relationships with colleagues, or even employees themselves like being under- or over-skilled for job, and it also affects workers in different ways. Some who found stress situation as a challenge may feel enthusiastic to combat (Sullivan & Bhagat, 1992) whereas those who found it as something undefeatable may become absentee workers. The study of occupational stress management intervention programs in the US reported that from year 1997 to 2001 the number of workers calling in sick has tripled as a result of stress (Richardson & Rothstein, 2008). However, it is apparent that stressed employees tend to be unmotivated and less productive which can lead to poor job performance and eventually decrease company's competitiveness in the market (Park, 2007). Thus, work-related stress is at the moment one of the important concerns for many

organizations because the magnitude and subsequent cost of stress problem are immense, and its effect on employees' health and well-being is on the increase (Makikangas & Kinnunen, 2003). Thereby, a focus on the identification of stress in organization so as to lessen and the development of stress management strategies, which a company can apply to its policies with the intention of assisting staffs from work stress, are vital.

1.2   Statement of Problem

Nowadays, workplace has become a potentially important source of stress because the amount of time that people usually spend in this place. For example, in Thailand, the majority of employed persons (37.8%) work 40-49 hours per week, followed by 33.9% who work 50 hours and over (Thailand National Statistical Office, 2011). Work stress can play a positive role by increasing alertness among staffs and stimulate their adaptive capabilities (Sullivan & Bhagat, 1992). For instance, stress can push employees to finish work in time, or adjust themselves to fit in new position/organization when getting a new job. However, it is only a certain level of stress that can have the potential to actually contribute to organizational effectiveness. Stress can become problematic once levels of unresolved stress begin to affect the health and productivity of the workforce. According to Medibank's research (2008), workplace stress cost Australian economy 14.81 billion USD a year, meanwhile stress-related presenteeism and absenteeism directly cost Australian employees 10.11 billion USD a year. Moreover, work stress does not only have negative impacts on individuals' organization but also spread to individuals' personal life such as marital and friendship relation (Sauter, Murphy, & Hurrell Jr, 1990a) since it is likely that employees bring their work problems home. Therefore, it is clear that the consequences of occupational stress can result in significant economic costs and social-related problems.

In hospitality industry, stress has been one of the most concerned variables that affects the performance of all levels, starting from front-line employees to top management (Ross, 1995), owing to the nature of business which is labor intensive and mainly dependent upon face to face contact with customers in the delivery of

services (Law, Pearce, & Wood, 1995). Kim (2008) found that job stress in hospitality industry lessens employees' well-being by creating long term exhaustion which negatively affects service delivery. Especially in luxurious or five-star hotels, those employees dealing directly with the guests like front-line staffs may easily become stressed due to the numerous desires from both guests and hotel managers claiming for the high standard of hotel's service quality. Some of researchers even called hospitality industry as "emotional labor" due to the obligation requiring employees to be friendly and positive all the time when contacting with the guests so that the guests can feel welcome (Lashley, 2001). Therefore, with the nature of hotel business, workers in this environment are not only exposed to load pressure of being required to respond promptly but also subject to serve high demands and expectations from a variety of sources (Dann, 1990). Moreover, if staffs are unjustifiably stressed or unhappy, these emotional feelings can convey to the services and poor quality may occur as a consequence (Brymer, 1982; Zohar, 1994).

Furthermore, high stress levels have the potential to result in high levels of staff turnover which subsequently can lead to higher training costs and problems in service quality (Cavanaugh, Boswell, Roehling, & Boudreau, 2000; Zohar, 1994; Davidson, Timo, & Wang, 2010). Turnover instigates not only operational disruption in organization but also decline of customer's satisfaction towards service quality due to the replacement of new employees who have less knowledge and experience in doing those jobs (Hausknecht, Trevor, & Howard, 2009). In addition, another aspect that should be considered owing to labor turnover is the opportunity cost (Lashley & Chaplain, 1999), which is the cost of the next-best valued choice of that resource when making decision (Ferraro & Taylor, 2005), as the company has to choose and considerably invest in the most talented candidates who should be working for the best of company's competitive advantage over other potential ones (Lowery, 2010). Moreover, job stress costs the U.S. industry more than 300 billion USD each year by reason of healthcare, productivity, and turnover, reported by The American Institute of Stress (2004). Similar to another study (Palmer, Cooper, & Thomas, 2004), it indicated that work-related stress caused the national economy astoundingly huge amount of money in productivity loss. Therefore, stress management in hospitality is

not only an imperative practice that can maintain employees' good health and performance, but it can be a strategic plan to decrease organizational expenses as well.

While the relevance of stress to the well-being of individuals and organization have been recognized (Edwards, 1992), little concentration has been given to hospitality industry in terms of stress management study, particularly in luxurious hotels where it is likely to have high expectation and demands from guests. There is a definite need for a research in this area, especially in Thailand where hospitality sector plays a major role in economy. As report, Thailand's tourism and hospitality industry has generated revenue for the country equals to 42 billion USD (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2010). Nevertheless, there are not many empirical researches studying on this matter in five-star hotels in Thailand. For these reasons, the researcher recognizes the importance of a study concerning employees' stress with the intention of developing effective stress management programs.

1.3 Research Objectives

There are four objectives that this study aims to study.

1. To identify types of work stress that front-line employees of five-star hotels encounter.

2. To study how work stress affects front-line employees' job performance.

3. To examine how front-line employees evaluate stress management programs of their hotels if applicable.

4. To investigate how front-line employees cope with work stress.

1.4 Research Questions

In order to fulfill research objectives that involve with work stress classification, effect of work stress on job performance, coping styles, and assessment of stress management programs, the research questions are as follows.

1. To what extent does work stress affect front-line employees' performance?

2. In which ways do hotels manage employees' work stress?

By asking question 1, it is expected to answer first and second objective, as the question can investigate source of job stress and how much it can have impact on employees' job performance in terms of task and contextual performance. Meanwhile, by asking question 2, it is expected to answer third and fourth objective, since the question can examine stress management programs' perceived-effectiveness if appropriate, or else it can study what kind of coping style; problem- or emotional-focused, being used by employees.

1.5 Significance of Research

The findings of this research will directly contribute to the benefits of both hotel management and hotel staffs. As employer aspects, the result will provide the better understanding of work stress, its importance, and its effect on front-line employees in terms of job performance. By this mean, hotels will be able to improve the work conditions to alleviate anticipate problems related to work stress which may maximize the company performance in overall. Further, the suggestion from this study may help hotel management in terms of cost savings due to employees' healthcare, hiring and training process, and opportunity cost. As well, having suitable stress programs for employees may result to the constancy of hotel's service quality, decrease of staff turnover, and positive brand image perceived by both staffs and customers. Likewise, for employees, firstly the appropriate stress management programs will enhance the quality of life at workplace. Secondly, the programs will keep maintaining employees' good health and well-being. Additionally, as mentioned, there are not many empirical researches about stress management in five-star hotels in Thailand. Therefore, the significance of research is also that this research will act as an indicator for five-star hotels in Thailand to realize the importance of managing stress and to implement an effective stress management programs for the benefits of both hotels and front-line employees.

1.6 Structure

This thesis consists of six parts. The first part provides the introduction primarily presenting the background, reasons, and benefits of conducting the research. In the second part, the literature review is presented to explain definitions, theories, and findings in previous empirical studies on related matters. The third part introduces the methodology of the research meanwhile the fourth part shows the results of study. Lastly, the discussion and conclusion of findings along with recommendations are presented in fifth and sixth part consecutively.
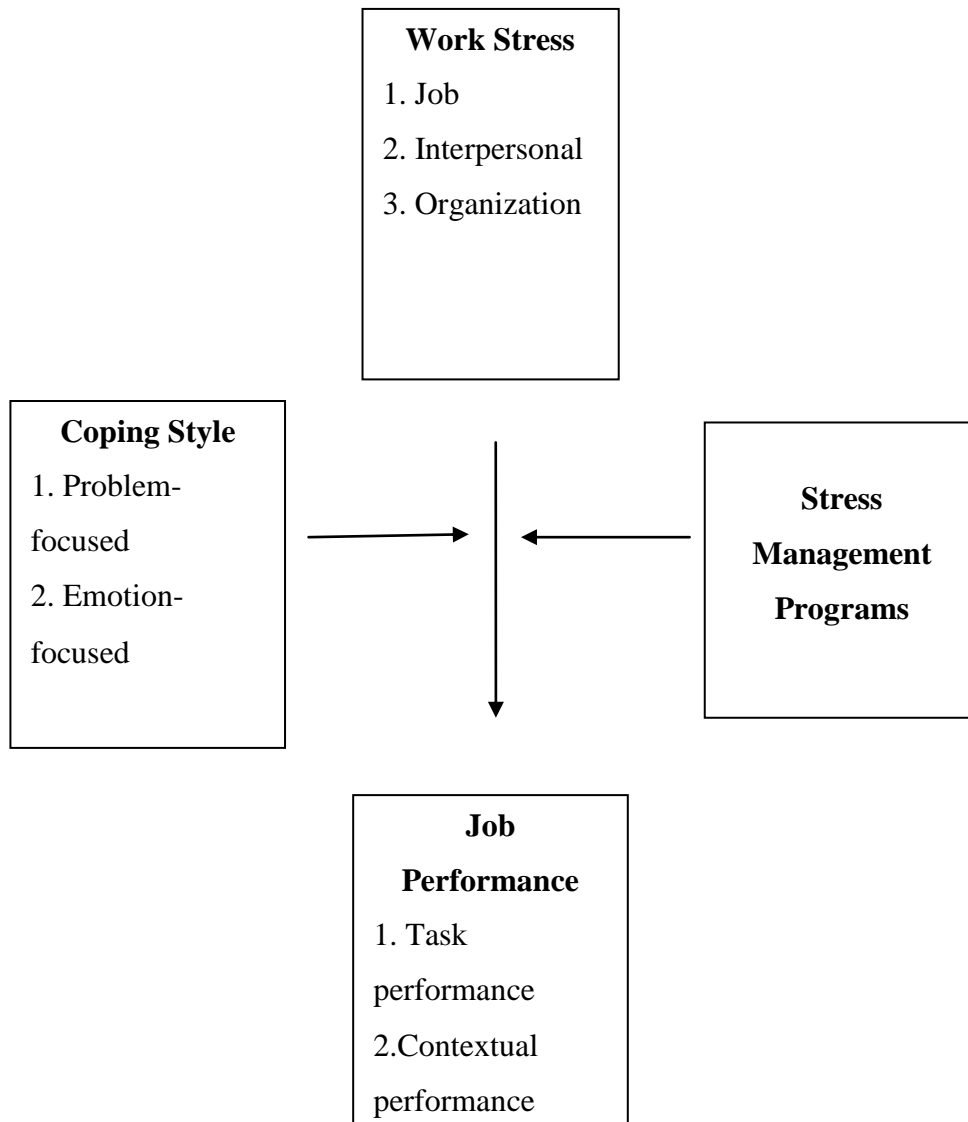
1.7 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1.1 Conceptual framework of the research

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Stress

According to Selye (1976), stress are problems or strains that people come across throughout life, originally considered in the 1950s, as an fundamental part of all aspects of an individual's life and can obstruct human needs and growth, which causes changes in physiological structure and chemical reactions and then results into physical and mental imbalance. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) described stress as a reaction of one towards an environment that threatens to the physical and mental function and also pointed out that stress is experienced only when situations are exceeded one's capability. Additionally, Farmer, Monahan, and Hekeler (1984) addressed that stress is the individual perceived from many kinds of circumstances. In some circumstance, it may cause different strain for individual. Robbins (2000) defined stress as the effect of pressure occurring when individuals could not respond to their need or face with the loss of desired things, including the opportunity that seems to be important to them.

However, stress can be coupled with both pleasant and unpleasant incidents and only becomes problematic when it remains unsolved (Faulkner & Patiar, 1997). It is understandable that some individuals will cope more effectively than others. Individuals who cannot cope effectively will become disorganized, disoriented and therefore less able to cope, and stress related job performance may eventuate. Fontana (1989) also defined stress as a "demand made upon the adaptive capacities of the mind and the body. If these capacities can handle the demand and enjoy the stimulation involved, then stress is welcome and helpful. If they can't and find the demand debilitating then stress is unwelcome and unhelpful" (p.3), this means stress can be both positive and negative to individuals. Therefore, from the different perceptions it can be concluded that stress refers to threats which cause frustration to

individuals and obstacle of development, which may result into imbalance of both physical and mental condition if they cannot cope well.

2.2 Work Stress

Work stress is often interchangeably called as job stress or occupational stress in organizational perspective and its definitions have been clarified by many researchers. For example, French et al (French, Cobb, Caplan, Van Harrison, & Pinneau, 1976) defined job stress as "any characteristic of the job environment which poses a threat to the individual, either due to excessive demands or insufficient supplies to meet his needs" (p.3). Sauter, Murphy and Hurrell (1990b) defined work stress as "harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources or need of the worker" (p.1151). From these definitions, therefore, work stress can refers to the arousals in organizational context which perceived by individuals that these stimuli are difficult or beyond individuals' abilities to cope. By this means, job stress normally occurs when employees' knowledge, skills, and attitudes cannot handle work demands and pressures in workplace.

Several empirical researches within work and organizational psychology have demonstrated that being exposed by work environment which consists of high levels of job demands are associated with increased levels of physical and psychological health problems (van Hooff, Geurts, Kompier, & Taris, 2007; Geurts & Sonnentag, 2006; De Lange, Taris, Kompier, Houtman, & Bongers, 2003; Sonnentag, 2001; Danna & Griffin, 1999; van der Doef & Maes, 1999). Furthermore, Liu (2002) found that heavy workload, interpersonal conflict, and organizational constraints that prevent employees to deliver high level of performance, are the common stressors which both Westerners and Easterners experienced at workplaces. Similarly, in a study of Taiwanese workers by Lu (1999), it also stated that heavy workload, lack of work autonomy, and interpersonal conflict are the most widespread. Likewise, Kazmi, Amjad, and Khan (2008) found that work overload, lack of resources, and lack of cooperation and comfort from supervisor and coworkers are the main sources that causing work stress.

Within hospitality industry, Ruyter, Wetzels, and Feinberg (2001) indicated that work stress has become problematic in customer-oriented businesses since workers have to encounter demands from all kinds of sources such as client, supervisors, and owner, which can simply result to dissonance for workers. In accordance with a study by Varca (1999), it reported that there was a negative correlation between job stress and quality of customer service delivery. This means that more stressed workers become, less service quality they deliver. Additionally, a research on work stress among hotel employees by Chiang, Birtch, and Kwan (2010) showed that the combination of high job demands, low job control, and work-life imbalance considerably result into higher level of job stress. Therefore, elements inducing job stress and types of work stress can be various but major recognized ones seem to be workload and interpersonal conflict.

2.3 Job Performance

Job performance is one of the most imperative dependent variable in organizational psychology (Kahya, 2009). Borman and Motowidlo (1997) identified two broad classes of employee behavior: task performance and contextual performance. Nonetheless, types of behavior are considered to contribute to organizational effectiveness, but in different ways.

Task performance involves patterns of behaviors that are directly involved in producing goods or service or activities that provide indirect support for the organization's core technical processes. Such criteria including quantity and quality of output were widely used task performance criteria to measure employee job performance in the ergonomic studies (Motowidlo, Borman, & Schmit, 1997). It consists of behaviors that associated with task fulfillment, which can be assessed on criteria such as quantity and quality produced, and job knowledge needed for achieving the task.

Contextual performance is defined as individual efforts that are not directly related to their main task function but are important because they shape the organizational, social, and psychological context that serves as the critical catalyst for task activities and processes (Werner, 2000). This comprises behaviors that favorable

to task fulfillment, which can be assessed on criteria such as good colleague relations, interpersonal facilitation, and job dedication (attendance and involvement).

2.4   The Effects of Stress towards Job Performance

The relationship between stress and performance has been examined for decades. According to Sullivan and Bhagat (1992), there are four models describing a relationship between stressors and job performance. Firstly, it is argued that performance is greater when only moderate amounts of stressors are apparent as opposed to low amounts of stressors. Secondly, it is claimed that stressors and job performance have a positive linear relationship. This means low levels of stressors result in low performance while high levels of stressors result in high performance. For instance, a study by van Dyne, Jehn, and Cummings (2002) has reported that higher levels of work stressors showed higher levels of work performance. This hypothesis has argued that when a stressor is primarily seen as challenge, it may lead to internal encouragement, increased efforts, and higher performance outcomes (LePine, Podsakoff, & Lepine, 2005). Thirdly, on the other hand, the model suggested that stressors and work performance have a negative linear relationship. In this case, work stressors may be seen as a threat or obstacle. Thus, low levels of stressors report high performance whereas high levels of stressors report low performance. Lastly, the hypothesis argued that there is no relationship between stressors and job performance.

Additionally, there is an alternative model demonstrating the relationship between stressors and performance as the inverted-U theory or a curvilinear relation. This theory suggested that low levels of stressors initially increase performance but once an optimum has been reached, then the increasing of stressor levels negatively affect performance. Nevertheless, the majority of empirical studies appear to find the results supporting the negative relation between stress and job performance. For example, Motowidlo, Packard, and Manning (1986) found a negative relationship between work stress and performance in a study of nurses. Similar to a study by Siu (2003), the findings showed that job stress and self-rated job performance were negatively related among employees in Hong Kong. Thus, the investigation of the relationship between work stress and job performance is vital.

2.5 Stress Management

Stress management program or stress management intervention (SMI) is an activity created by an organization with the attempt to reduce work-related stress or help employees to be less affected by negative influences of work stress (Ivancevich, Matteson, Freedman, & Philliops, 1990). The concentration on workplace's stress management has started since late 19th century and its recognition has been gradually increasing, especially in the U.S. (Richardson & Rothstein, 2008).

According to Ivancevich, Matteson, Freedman, and Philliops (1990), stress management model can aim to tackle three elements at workplace which are 1) the intensity of stressors 2) the employee's assessment of stressful events or 3) the employee's ability to cope with the effect. Furthermore, in accordance with Murphy and Sauter (2003), stress management intervention can also be categorized into primary, secondary, or tertiary. Primary intervention is an effort to change the cause of stress, whereas secondary intervention is an effort to decrease the effect of stress on individual's physicality and mentality before reaching severe point and, lastly, tertiary intervention is an attempt to assist individual from a serious health problem. Therefore, programs such as job rotation, supportive teamwork, and employee empowerment are considered as primary stage (Cecil & Forman, 1990), while activities like exercise, relaxing, and skill/knowledge training are referred as secondary stage (Giga, Faragher, Cooper, & Noblet, 2003). In the meantime, tertiary stage is normally a program which initiated to treat health or mental condition of employee with professional physicians (Arthur, 2000).

Nonetheless, the actual stress management programs are hardly described because the elements including in the programs are broad and also the concentration may be varied. Some programs may focus on individual, while some may focus on organization, or some may focus on both of them (Giga, Faragher, Cooper, & Noblet, 2003).

2.6 Coping Style

Coping style is behavioral or cognitive responses that people use to manage stress which depend on individual's perception and past experiences. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined coping as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person." (p.141). Meanwhile, Schuler (1984) defines coping as "a process of analysis and evaluation to decide how to protect oneself against the adverse effects of any stress and its associated negative outcomes" (p.46). Thus, coping is individual's attempt behavior which conducts to manage encountered problems or conditions that he perceived as threats in order to stop, relieve or reject.

Coping behaviors may be directed externally or problem-focused and internally or emotion-focused. To clarify, problem-focused coping refers to efforts to manage, improve, or change the problem environment causing the stress, whilst emotion-focused coping refers to attempts, thoughts or actions which made to lessen emotional impact of stress (Bosworth, Bastian, Rimer, & Siegler, 2003). This coping is generally soothing in the sense that such coping does not actually alter the threatening but make the person feel better (2003). Examples of problem-focused coping include problem-solving activities, seeking information about what to do, holding back from impulsive and premature actions, and confronting difficulty. Whereas those of emotion-focused coping may include behaviors such as seeking others' company, cognitive responses such as denial of the true situation, and looking optimistically at the problem (Esther, Daly, Hancock, Bidewell, Johnson, Lambert, & Lambert, 2006).

In addition, there have been many researches which conducted studies about coping and its relationship with various variables. For example, Liu, Tein, and Zhao (2004) examined strategies used to cope with stress and explored the association between coping strategies and behavioral/emotional problems among adolescents from Mainland China. This study found an association between coping strategy and mental health problems in Chinese adolescents. Moreover, Vollrath and Torgersen (2000) studied the relationship between combined personality types: neuroticism, extraversion, and conscientiousness with coping among university students. They

found that types combining low neuroticism with high conscientiousness featured stress and coping. According to transactional stress models, coping is a fundamental variable in stress process because it can help offset the impacts of stressors. Regarding studies within Asia, there was a four –factor model of Chinese coping strategies developed by Siu, Spector and Cooper (2006). The model composed of four strategies: hobbies/ relaxation, active action, seeking social support, and passive adaptation, which were used to investigate the effects of work stressors on job performance in the study.

CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

    This study integrates the secondary data which are job stress literature and previous stress-related empirical studies, as well as the primary data which include the in-depth interview and survey. In so doing, the research applies mixed-method approach which means using both qualitative method and quantitative method.

    By using qualitative method, the study conducts an in-depth interview with front-line employees in order to obtain in-depth information regarding work stress, job performance, coping styles, and perceived-effectiveness of how hotels manage employees' work stress. Also, there is an in-depth interview with human resource managers in order to gain in-depth information and their perspective on the topic of stress management program, whether it is offered by hotel or not.

    By applying quantitative method, the study distributes structured questionnaires to front-line employees with the purpose of investigating 1) demography: age and gender 2) types of work stress which front-line employees encounter 2) the effect of work stress on job performance 3) the evaluation of hotel's stress management program perceived by front-line employees and 4) individual coping styles which front-line employees use to handle with stress.

3.2 Scope of the Study

    According to Thai Hotels Association (2011), there are 23 five-star hotels in Bangkok province. Therefore, this research principally emphasizes on front-line employees who work in Front Office for these 23 five-star hotels, with the belief that front-line staffs have a great possible to confront with a number of problems and they are the most important link (Karatepe, Uludag, Menevis, Hadzimehmedagic, & Baddar, 2006) for this case since these positions directly deal with the guests for most

of the times, starting from the first day that the guests check-in and until the day that the guests check-out. Also, the study focuses on another key informant that is hotel management, meaning human resource manager of each hotel, as this position is responsible for organizational policies and human resource management.

The areas of study in which the research looks into are as follows.

- Work stress: It consists of three types of job stress which come from 1) job itself 2) interpersonal-related issues and 3) organizational matters.

- Job performance: This is divided into two categories which are task performance and contextual performance.

- Coping style: There are two kinds of coping behaviors used which classified as problem-focused style and emotion-focused style.

- Evaluation: This is an assessment of stress management program if available, in terms of the effectiveness which perceived by employees.

3.3 Population and Sample Size

As mentioned, there are 23 five-star hotels in Bangkok as reported in 2011 by Thai Hotels Association. Nonetheless, there are two groups of sample size for each method.

The following lists are the names of 23 five-star hotels in Bangkok, Thailand.

1. Amari Water Bangkok
2. Bangkok Marriott Resort & Spa
3. Banyan Tree Bangkok
4. Centara Grand at Central World
5. Conrad Bangkok Hotel
6. DusitThani Bangkok
7. The Imperial Queen's Park Hotel
8. Intercontinental Bangkok
9. JW Marriott Bangkok
10. Mandarin Oriental Bangkok

11. The Peninsula Bangkok

12. Pullman Bangkok King Power

13. Ramada Plaza Menam Riverside Bangkok

14. Royal Orchid Sheraton Hotel & Towers

15. Shangri-La Hotel Bangkok

16. Sheraton Grande Sukhumvit

17. Siam City Hotel

18. Sofitel Bangkok Silom

19. Sofitel Centara Grand Bangkok

20. The Sukhothai

21. Swissotel Le Concorde Bangkok

22. Vie Hotel Bangkok

23. The Westin Grande Skhumvit Bangkok

For the in-depth interview, there will be two front desk staffs, who voluntarily agree to do the interview, from each hotel and that will result in 46 interviewees. Additionally, there will be a manager of Human Resource Department from each hotel as a representative of hotel management, which will result in 23 interviewees. Thus, the sum of participant for in-depth interview is 69 persons.

For the sample size of questionnaire distribution, a simplified formula Yamane's equation of Sample Size Determination (Yamane, 1967) is applied. However, since there is no record of the number of front office staffs available in all 23 hotels, the researcher assumes that there are approximately 15 front office staffs in each hotel, based on the interview with the Director of Human Resource of Centara Grand at Central World, Bangkok (Wannasorn, personal communication, 23 December 2011). Therefore, the sum of total population is $15 \times 23 = 345$ employees. The calculation for the sample size is as follows.

This formula is used to calculate the sample size for 95% confidence level.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = total population

e = allowable error of sampling, the significant level equal 0.05

from:

$$n = \frac{345}{1 + 345(0.05)^2}$$

$$= \frac{345}{1 + 0.86}$$

$$= 185.48$$

Thus, the sample size of this study for questionnaire distribution is 186 employees.

3.4 Study Instrument

Questionnaire survey will be used as a tool to collect primary data related to the thesis topic which emphasizing on employees' work stress and its effect on job performance. Based on the study of stress survey by Communication Worker Union (Labor Resource Department for the CWU, 2001), questionnaire is mainly designed to close-ended question and scale-rating style but also has open-ended questions. It consists of five main sections: demographic characteristics, work stress, effect of work stress on job performance, evaluation of stress management program, and individual coping styles. Pilot test will be conducted to eliminate ambiguity in the questionnaires.

Five main sections in which the questionnaire composed are as follows.

Part A: Demographic Characteristics
This section gathers personal information about the participants including gender and age.

Part B: Work Stress
This section contains 20 questions related to work stress which categorized into3 types of sources: job, interpersonal, and organization. The respondent will be asked to rate the level of frequency of each criteria on the 5-point Likert scale with 1

meaning "Never" and 5 meaning "Constantly", whereas "N/A" refers to not applicable.

Part C: Effect of Work Stress on Job Performance

This section contains 10 questions concerning the impact of work stress on employee's job performance, which classified to two kinds of job performances: task performance and contextual performance. The respondent will be asked to rate the level of agreement of each criteria on the 5-point Likert scale with 1 meaning "Strongly disagree" and 5 meaning "Strongly agree", whereas "N/A" refers to not applicable.

Part D: Evaluation of Hotel's Stress Management Program

This section contains 11 questions regarding effectiveness of hotel's stress management programs which perceived by employees. The respondent will be asked to rate the level of perceived-effectiveness of each criteria on the 5-point Likert scale with 1 meaning "Not effective at all" and 5 meaning "Very effective", whereas "N/A" refers to not applicable.

Part E: Individual Coping Styles

This section contains 10 questions associating to coping behaviors which being used to cope with stress, which divided into two styles: problem-focused and emotion-focus coping style. The respondent will be asked to rate the level of perceived-effectiveness of each criteria on the 5-point Likert scale with 1 meaning "Not effective at all" and 5 meaning "Very effective", whereas "N/A" refers to not applicable.

3.5 Data Collection

For primary data, a letter describing the purpose and details of this study will firstly be sent to Human Resource (HR) Department of all 23 five-star hotels in Bangkok to acquire permission to conduct the research and collect employee data at the hotels. If the permission is approved, primary data will be collected through in-

depth interview and survey to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data. Also, audio recording and note-taking will be used while doing the interview if the permission is voluntarily granted by participants. The subjects will be ensured that they are free to withdraw from the participation at anytime. Moreover, their privacy and confidentiality are protected throughout the data collection processes and afterwards. The recorded data and questionnaire data will be terminated immediately after the researcher officially passes the final defense.

For secondary data, the investigator will collect documents, article journals, e-journals, statistics and other related information from both public and private sectors regarding to work stress and job performance, particularly in hospitality industry.

The timeframe of this research is three months in total, starting from distributing questionnaires and conducting interview in February, 2012, until finishing the research paper in April, 2012. The approximate time period is presented as follows.

- Data collection   1   month

- Data analysis   1   month

- Writing complete report   1   month

3.6 Data Analysis

This study combines two methods of data analysis. First, qualitative data obtained from in-depth interviews will be analyzed by content analysis technique to describe the effects of work stress on job performance and also how hotel managements and employees manage work stress. Second, quantitative data obtained from questionnaires will be analyzed by computer program called the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program. The descriptive statistics including means, median, mode, frequency, standard deviation, and percentage distribution will be calculated to explain employees' demography, types of work stress, the effect of work stress on job performance, the evaluation of hotel's stress management program, and coping styles, based on the 5 – level of Likert scale.

CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

According to methodology, 23 listed five-star hotels in Bangkok have been contacted to participate in this study, however, only five of them responded. After permission was granted, 15 questionnaires were sent out to Front Office Department of each hotel in order to gather the quantitative data. Therefore, the total number of distributed questionnaires was 75. At the same time, two Front Desk staffs and a HR manager of each hotel were asked to join the in-depth interview as one of methods in this study to collect qualitative data. In the end, after receiving the distributed questionnaire back and checking for correctness, there were 58 questionnaires left in total to be studied in this research. As well, there were 15 people who participated in the interviews.

The results of data analysis are reported into two sections: 1) Quantitative analysis, and 2) Qualitative analysis. For quantitative analysis, SPSS computer program has been used to analyze the data. The frequencies and descriptive statistics are presented in five parts as follows:

Part A Demographic data of the sample

Part B Types of work stress

Part C The effect of work stress on job performance

Part D The evaluation of hotel's stress management program

Part E Coping styles

4.1   Quantitative Analysis

Part A Demographic data of the sample

From 58 hotel staffs who working in Front Office, there were 24 males (41.4%) and 32 females (55.2%). Most of them aged between 32-41 years old (56.9%) with the mean age of 32.16 years (S.D = 6.19). The details were shown in Table 1.

Table 4.1 Number and percentage of employees, classified by gender and age

Characteristic	Number (N = 58)	Percentage (100.0)
Gender		
Male	24	41.4
Female	32	55.2
Age (years)		
22 – 31	20	34.5
32 – 41	33	56.9
42 – 51	5	8.6
Min = 22, Max = 51, Mean = 32.16, S.D. = 6.19		

Part B Types of work stress

The descriptive statics of types of work stress experienced by the sample were shown in Table 2. The most frequent work stress encountered by front-line staffs was item 5: Working under high pressure and demand, which received the highest mean score of 3.09 (S.D. = 1.01). The second most frequent experienced was item 2: Having too much work to do (M = 2.86, S.D. = 0.75). Following by item 7: Dealing with unpleasant guests, it received the third highest mean score of 2.74 (S.D. = 0.95). Therefore, the top two highest work stress reported by staffs were item 5 and item 2 which considered as job stress, and followed by item 10 which   under the classification of interpersonal stress. However, there were many items that their mean scores were quite high and close to the item 10 such as item 6: Receiving low rate

payments or less income than expected (M = 2.69, S.D. = 1.08), item 7: Imbalance work-life or conflicting demands of work and home (M =2.63, S.D. = 0.93), item 3: Lack of autonomy or job control (M = 2.62, S.D. = 0.75), and item 1: Being over-skilled or under-skilled for the job (M = 2.61, S.D. = 0.78). Moreover, these four items were under job stress criteria. Meanwhile, work stress which related to organization has been reported quite low comparing to other types. For example, item 18: Having problems with organizational culture and item 19: Unsafe or unfriendly workplace environment received the mean score of 2.00 (S.D. = 0.82) and 2.04 (S.D. = 0.77) consecutively. Hence, the majority of work stress which front-line employees experienced was related to the job.

Table 4.2 Frequency of work stress which front-line staffs encountered

Characteristics/Situations	Mean	S.D.
Job		
5) Working under high pressure and demand	3.09	1.01
2) Having too much work to do	2.86	0.75
6) Receiving low rate payments or less income than expected	2.69	1.08
7) Imbalance work-life or conflicting demands of work and home	2.63	0.93
3) Lack of autonomy or job control	2.62	0.75
1) Being over-skilled or under-skilled for the job	2.61	0.78
4) Unclear roles or job responsibilities	2.29	0.85
Interpersonal		
10) Dealing with unpleasant guests	2.74	0.95
12) Lack of cooperation from colleagues	2.22	0.88
9) Having conflicts with co-workers or managers	2.18	0.90
8) Working with inconsiderate or unsupportive supervisors	2.14	1.01
11) Bullying, harassment, or violence from guests or other employees	2.12	0.97
Organization		
20) Other work stress	2.35	0.93

16) Unfair performance evaluation systems	2.28	0.96
17) Unclear organizational policies	2.25	0.83
13) Poor communication within department/organization	2.23	0.85
14) Poor management within department/organization	2.23	0.78
15) Poor leadership	2.18	0.87
19) Unsafe or unfriendly workplace environment	2.04	0.77
18) Having problems with organizational culture	2.00	0.82

Part C The effect of work stress on job performance

Table 3 shows the effect of work stress on job performance which reported by hotel staffs. Item 1: You are unable to perform tasks as well as you used to, your judgment is not as good as it was obtained the highest mean score of 2.58 (S.D. = 0.96), followed by item 2: You have difficulty to meet deadlines which receive the mean score of 2.50 (S.D. = 0.91). Both of them were also under task performance classification. On the other hand, none of the items under contextual performance was reported high score comparing to task performance. The highest mean score in contextual performance part was reported in item 7: You feel unmotivated or less committed to your work (M = 2.16, S.D. = 0.93) and item 8: You are unlikely to interact with others in a helpful and informative manner (M = 2.16, S.D. = 0.93). Nonetheless, item 10 which stating other effects has received the average score not far from those top two items (M = 2.43, S.D. = 0.83). As a result, information about other effects could be explained in details from interview data in qualitative part.

Table 4.3 Job performance which affected by work stress

Due to work stress:	Mean	S.D.
Task performance		
1) You are unable to perform tasks as well as you used to, your judgment is not as good as it was.	2.58	0.96
2) You have difficulty to meet deadlines.	2.50	0.91

5) You are less attentive to detail and accuracy.	2.25	0.83
3) You are unable to fulfill the tasks and responsibilities of your job.	2.10	0.84
4) You have difficulty to make effective oral and written communication clear and easy to understand.	2.00	0.83
Contextual performance		
10) Other effects	2.43	0.83
7) You feel unmotivated or less committed to your work.	2.16	0.93
8) You are unlikely to interact with others in a helpful and informative manner.	2.16	0.93
9) You often call for sick leave or ask for day off	2.08	0.87
6) You tend to have frequent arguments with superiors, co-workers, or guests.	2.02	0.98

Part D The evaluation of hotel's stress management program

As staffs have been asked to evaluate their hotel's programs/policies associated to stress management, the results shown in Table 4 indicated that there were five programs/policies that perceived to be more effective than average level. These five programs/policies consisted of item 7: Supportive work environment (M = 3.40, S.D. = 0.66), item 8: Balance or flexible work schedule (M = 3.40, S.D. = 0.77), item 6: Employee empowerment (M = 3.15, S.D. = 0.80), item 5: Friendly and safety work climate (M = 3.13, S.D. = 0.59), and item 3: Skill and knowledge training (M = 3.09, S.D. = 0.76). Thus, both of item 7 and 8 have received the highest mean score of perceived-effectiveness, following by item 6, 5, and 3 consecutively, whereas the rest of items were rated lower than average level.

Table 4.4 Perceived-effectiveness of the hotel's programs/policies

Stress management programs/policies	Perceived-effectiveness	
	Mean	**S.D.**
7) Supportive work environment	3.40	0.66
8) Balance or flexible work schedule	3.40	0.77
6) Employee empowerment	3.15	0.80
5) Friendly and safety work climate	3.13	0.59
3) Skill and knowledge training	3.09	0.76
9) Social events	2.80	0.98
1) Physical training, exercise, or gym membership	2.67	0.86
4) Professional consultation (i.e. counselor or psychologist)	2.67	0.75
10) Stress management training	2.60	0.80
2) Spiritual/Religious activities	2.57	0.75

Part E Coping styles

There are two types of coping styles using in this study which are problem-focused and emotion-focused style. The individual coping style that has been perceived as highest effective by front-line employees was item 7: I calm myself and keep positive (M = 3.59, S.D. = 0.73), which considered as emotion-focused coping style. However, the mean score of following items, which belong to problem-focused coping style, such as item 1: I confront the difficulties and problems (M = 3.50, S.D. = 0.60), item 3: I discuss the problems with supervisors and coworkers to find solution (M = 3.48, S.D. = 0.78), item 2: I seek more information about problems (M = 3.45, S.D. = 0.73), and item 4: I acquire knowledge or skills that could be useful in work and my life (M = 3.45, S.D. = 0.71) , were just a bit less than the highest one. Therefore, coping styles which have normally been used by staffs when they experienced the problem at work were both emotion-focused and problem-focused style. Nevertheless, the main coping behavior to deal with work stress emphasized on

being calm and positive. As below, the details of individual coping styles were shown in Table 5.

Table 4.5 Perceived-effectiveness of individual coping styles

Coping behavior	Perceived-effectiveness	
	Mean	S.D.
Problem-focused		
1) I confront the difficulties and problems.	3.50	0.60
3) I discuss the problems with supervisors and coworkers to find solution.	3.48	0.78
2) I seek more information about problems.	3.45	0.73
4) I acquire knowledge or skills that could be useful in work and my life.	3.45	0.71
5) I manage problems by changing the elements which cause stress.	3.30	0.71
Emotion-focused		
7) I calm myself and keep positive.	3.59	0.73
6) I ask for advice/support from others.	3.31	0.78
8) I look for comfort in a belief in a power greater than myself such as praying.	3.16	0.86
9) I get away from the problems.	3.09	0.82
10) I do nothing.	2.46	0.99

4.2 Qualitative Analysis

As mentioned, the number of subjects who agreed to do in-depth interviews in this study was 15 persons. There were two Front Desk staffs and 1 HR manager from each hotel. As a result, since five five-star hotels in Bangkok have participated in this research, there were 10 front-line staffs and five HR managers in total. Furthermore, HR managers who joined the interviews were three females and

two males. On the other hand, there were five females and five males for hotel staffs. In addition, one of the staffs was non-Thai, while the rest were Thai.

The interview transcripts and notes were coded for criteria of work stress and stress management in five-star hotels. The researcher analyzed several mentioned categories of work stress and its effects on job performance in hotel business, the evaluation of hotels' stress management, and employees' coping styles. Afterward, the frequencies of types by category were quantified.

In accordance with the agreement between researcher and participants, the name of hotels and employees were replaced with pseudonyms and stripped otherwise potentially identifying information to protect the hotels, their staffs, and their guests.

4.2.1 Stress situations in hotel business

The importance of stress has been seen by both hotel management and employees. All HR managers agreed that stress was one of the most imperative matters in business and it was something that everyone had to experience in life. Thus, stress issue needed to be considered at all time. As well as hotel employees, they stated that stress could negatively affect their performance, which was a serious issue for luxurious hotels where the guests expected high standard of service quality. Moreover, a few of them added that level of stress depended on job responsibilities, meaning that higher position they got, more stressed they became. The name of staffs and hotels were kept anonymous due to the request:

"Stress always comes from responsibilities. When you get a higher position, you must be prepared for more works you have to do and that means more stress you will get (Front Desk staff 1, hotel D, personal communication, 9 February 2012)."

"Stress comes once you're going up. I'd never been a supervisor but when I became assistant manager, I have to handle all the guests' cases or conferences. That time is when stress comes. It's the responsibilities, when I have to take care the other people, when I have to think about hotel's regulations, when I have to deal with the conferences (Front Desk staff 1, hotel B, personal communication, 1 February 2012)."

Overall, stress situations in hotels came from job and interpersonal matters. Every employee reported that job- and guest-related stress was work stress that they encountered the most. 100 percent of staffs said they had to deal with guests' complaints which caused them stressed. As being Front Desk, some staffs mentioned that they were often blamed by guests for something that it was not their fault:

"Several times I got stressed by guests' complaints because it wasn't my fault. For example, one guest called taxi in front of the hotel but that taxi didn't take him to the place he wanted. So, when he got back to the hotel he came to me and complained. I was thinking like, was it my fault? But I had to apologize him anyway (Front Desk staff 2, hotel A, personal communication, 25 January 2012)."

"Front is everything. Even the food doesn't taste good, the guests will come to complain to us. Maybe it's because that they don't know who they should contact so they have to come to Front as always (Front Desk staff 2, hotel D, personal communication, 9 February 2012)."

Another staff also cited that he had to handle guests' emotions and it was difficult due to the background of the guests:

"There're so many kinds of guests. Some are good, some are bad. Some are easy to serve but some are not. Each guest has different need because they come from different background. And we have to take care their emotion as well. Sometimes it's hard because we don't know their background (Front Desk staff 1, hotel C, personal communication, 8 February 2012)."

In addition, 30 percent of staffs mentioned about the stress which came from supervisors and coworkers. They accepted that it was a normal issue in every organization. One staff explained that seniority issue was the problem in her organization. Also, another one, who was non-Thai, addressed problems about communication and culture issue:

"I got promoted when I was young and my coworkers were older than me. It's very difficult to control them since they were senior. I needed to prove a lot to them that I have ability to do work very well. Later, they started to accept me (Front Desk staff 1, hotel B, personal communication, 1 February 2012)."

"It's hard for me to communicate with coworkers because they don't speak my language. Also, people here have different thought and culture so it makes

things even harder for me to adjust myself into (Front Desk staff 2, hotel B, personal communication, 1 February 2012)."

Likewise, job-related stress was described by front-line employees as high pressure and demand, busy, difficult, and long/imbalance working-hour job. In terms of high pressure and demand, 70 percent of staffs reported that their job needed to meet deadline, goal/target, and hotel standard otherwise it would be a big problem. Moreover, not only they received a lot of demands from several guests but also from top managers, which then they needed to manage and coordinate effectively in order to make everyone happy:

"Working as Front it's difficult; have to deal with so many people and a lot of demands, from the guests, from the boss. And you have to finish work in time, meet deadline, and you cannot take work home. You have to make it done at the hotel. And there are so many people that you need to coordinate with, like Housekeeping, F&B. So if you can't finish or be good at your job, it can affect many people. It's a high pressure job (Front Desk staff 1, hotel E, personal communication, 15 February 2012).

Regarding busy/work overload and difficult attributes, 50 percent of staffs explained that being as Front Desk was hard work and stressful since it required a lot of abilities to perform the work well such as being detail-oriented, accurate, informative, and also good at language communication and time management. Furthermore, several employees agreed that this job was normally busy and they had to do many things at once. Many times they encountered work overload due to a large number of guests checking in at the same time:

"This job is hard. Some people think this job is only to check-in and check-out but actually it is not. For example, when I'm free, I have to update information like currency exchange because this kind of information has to be accurate. If I key in wrong information, then I have to pay (Front Desk staff 2, hotel A, personal communication, 25 January 2012)."

"We are quite busy at all time because we have to do several things. Many times I have to solve other people's problems. We don't have enough staffs. They should recruit good skill people who can work for a long period of time (Front Desk staff 2, hotel C, personal communication, 8 February 2012)".

In respect of working hour, the imbalance of time spending between work and family/friend has been mentioned by 40 percent of staffs. Employees have become stressed when they could not be with their family or friends when they needed because of work schedule that did not match with other people in family or friends. Additionally, two staffs reported that they had to work 10 hours a day. As a result of long working hour, it was difficult for them to do other activities:

"I have to work 10 hours a day you know. So it's hard for me to join other people's activities. I wanted to go to the gym but I was so tired (Front Desk staff 2, hotel B, personal communication, 1 February 2012)."

"Working for hotels, you work when people are off, and you are off when others work. So, it's quite difficult to go anywhere with my family because I usually have to work when they're having a holiday. It bothers me sometimes too (Front Desk staff 2, hotel E, personal communication, 15 February 2012)."

Besides the major stress situations mentioned above, there were a few staffs who talked about monetary issue like salary which perceived to be lower than what they expected. This matter was also in accordance with HR's perspectives. Two out of five HR managers said that financial issue was the key causation that made employees leave the company. However, every HR manager admitted that the most frequently experienced work stress that staffs encountered in hotel business were job- and interpersonal-related stress. The interpersonal work stress that HR people mentioned also implied to problems that employees had with supervisors and coworkers, not only hotel guests. In addition, 40 percent of HR managers revealed that they used exit interview as one of methods to find out about stress in workplace in order to improve the organizations:

"The main concern about employee's stress for HR and Training is the employee's salary, welfare, and benefit, because these factors are related to personal. High turnover is a nature in hotel business. You know, just different only 1,000 Bath they will go. As same as me, just giving me 5,000 more and I will go, for sure. This is a hotel culture (HR manager, hotel A, personal communication, 25 January 2012)."

"There is always high turnover after giving bonus. Employees will always try to find a new job at other hotels that can pay them more. Money is one of the main problems for almost every employee. As being HR, we try to help them as

much as possible. I do ask the reasons from employees if they want to quit the job so that I know what's going on in the hotel. If I can help, I will do it right away, for example, if they have a problem with supervisors, I will try to rotate them to work in other sections so they don't have to deal with those supervisors (HR manager, hotel B, personal communication, 1 February 2012)."

4.2.2 The effects of work stress on job performance

From the management's viewpoints, work stress certainly has negative impacts on job performance of the hotel staffs. Low job performance has been reported as a result of employees' stress by every manager in this study. All HR managers illustrated that employees who underwent stress were likely to show their attitudes and reactions in unfavorable ways, which directly impact their task performance since the nature of hotel industry required service-minded characteristic. Moreover, work stress could affect employees' health and well-being, consequently, they needed to call off or have sick leave which possibly led to the decrease of individual's performance as well as the team's performance:

"Stress absolutely affected employee's performance in a negative way. For those who work in Front, they will show it through their body expression like the way they look, they way they behave to the guests. Whereas, for those who work in back office, if they are stressed, they will just call off. But for Front, they will come to work but you can see the unhappy feelings through their eyes, even they smile (HR manager, hotel D, personal communication, 9 February 2012)."

"Stress caused low performance in employee. When they are stressed, they cannot work well. And when they got too stressed, they became sick, like headache, stomachache, and many things. Then, they will not come to work. But sometime it depends on a person too. Some staffs can handle stress very well and they know how to separate problems from work (HR manager, hotel E, personal communication, 15 February 2012)."

On the other hand, from hotel employees' perspectives, 70 percent of front-line staffs reported that work stress negatively influenced their job performance, whereas 20 percent indicated positive impact and 10 percent stated no effect at all.

Those who agreed that stress affected their performance explained that when they were stressed, they could not work well. Furthermore, both physical and emotional problems have been mentioned as outcomes of workplace stress, which later resulted in low job performance such as having difficulty to finish tasks on time, inability to perform job well, and being unmotivated to work:

"I cannot work 100% with the next guest if I get stressed. It affected my emotion. Sometimes I just had a problem with this guest, and another guest came. I couldn't put all my intention to him because I still had a bad feeling towards what had just happened to me (Front Desk staff 2, hotel A, personal communication, 25 January 2012)."

"I sometimes even had a bad dreaming because of stress at work. When I get stressed, I pretty much feel depressed and unmotivated to go to work (Front Desk staff 1, hotel D, personal communication, 9 February 2012)."

"When I'm stressed, it's hard for me to focus what I'm doing. The mistakes usually happened when I'm in a hurry or need to do something that I know I'm not good at it (Front Desk staff 2, hotel E, personal communication, 15 February 2012)."

Nonetheless, those who stated stress as a positive influence were defined work stress as a push or challenge to drive and motivate them to work. They explained that stress generated enthusiasm as they had to try to find the way to solve those problems. Lastly, a staff who mentioned no effect of stress, she described that stress neither had positive nor negative on her as she always understood the cause of problems and knew how to deal with them:

"Stress is positive than negative thing to me. Stress at work makes me feel motivated and push me to work. As I am a person who never gives up on anything, I will face the problem and try to solve it (Front Desk staff 1, hotel E, personal communication, 15 February 2012)."

"For me, stress is nothing. It can't do anything to me now. At first I was stressed when I faced the problems, but not anymore. Past experiences teach me how to deal with all the problems. So, it doesn't affect my job performance at all (Front Desk staff 1, hotel B, personal communication, 1 February 2012)."

4.2.3 How hotels manage employees' stress

Despite the importance of stress, all HR managers in the study admitted that they have not yet implemented an actual stress management program or policy. However, the hotels have offered a variety of activities and programs which conducted in order to indirectly reduce employees' stress. Similarly, the hotel employees agreed that many programs provided by hotels have effectively decreased their level of stress.

From staffs' views, the common activities mentioning in the interviews included staff party, outing, sport day, and training. Many of them found these activities effective in terms of stress relief. Particularly, skill and knowledge training was perceived as a very supportive method since it helped employees to perform the job better, which in turn they became less stressed. In addition, staffs generally evaluated the effectiveness of offered activities by using their feeling (i.e. the feeling of less stressful or motivated), performance evaluation by supervisor, and guest's survey:

" There were many activities that hotel offered, such as staff party, trips like going to temple and planting coral, and sport day. I think these activities can reduce my stress. I want the hotel to continue doing them (Front Desk staff 1, hotel A, personal communication, 25 January 2012)."

"I like that they have a training session 2-3 times a month. I think it's effective in terms of reducing stress because after I trained, I got myself improve in those matters that we learned. However, many times those trainings didn't offer in English language so I couldn't understand. Anyway, the hotel also has survey related to stress about twice a year, which I think it is effective method (Front Desk staff 2, hotel B, personal communication, 1 February 2012)."

However, not everyone agreed with the effectiveness of these activities. A few staffs mentioned that these activities implemented by hotels were not useful at all since their jobs were too busy, so they barely had time to attend:

"The hotel doesn't have an actual stress management program, but they have activities like sport day and party. But for me, those things are not helpful at all since I couldn't find time to join. They should hire more people to work instead (Front Desk staff 1, hotel C, personal communication, 8 February 2012)."

Alternatively, from hotel management's points, every HR managers emphasized more on hotel policies and regulations which in accordance with Head Office overseas, such as employee's benefit/welfare, health and safety, recognition/award, and also training. Many of them suggested that if the hotel gave good benefits to employees, it could reduce employees' stress. Moreover, some said that staffs may receive stress from many sources and could easily have an effect on their job performance. Thus, HR people agreed that they attempted to support staffs as much as possible, especially creating new policies or programs that suited employees' needs. For example, when there was flooding in Bangkok in October 2011, the hotels have helped their staffs who were flood victims by doing fund raising, crisis recovery, or giving free meal and hotel for them and their families to stay. Additionally, the interviews showed that hotels' management usually evaluated the effectiveness of hotels' policies and programs by using staff's evaluation form, survey, and interview.

"We care about our employees a lot because they are our internal customers. It's one of our company cores. We have set many activities in order to make our employees happy like staff party, outing, employee of the month, friends' donation foundation, learning room, gym, talk show, workshop, fund raising for flood victims, and etc. We believe that these programs can somehow indirectly reduce employees. Also, we have Employee Satisfaction Survey which is 100 questions online to check the happiness of staffs twice a year (HR manager, hotel C, personal communication, 8 February 2012)."

"We offer various kinds of programs in order to facilitate our staffs in many ways, for instance, religious activities for Buddhism and Muslim, Management Development Program (MDD) to train new staffs, Open Door policy, staff party/outing, Employer of Choice, Engagement Employee to reduce gap between Management and staffs like dining with GM, and suggestion box in canteen (HR manager, hotel D, personal communication, 9 February 2012)."

4.2.4 Employee's coping styles

Notwithstanding the hotels' stress management, this research also studied how hotel employees normally managed work problems and coped themselves when undergoing stress. 80 percent of staffs addressed that they would attempt to solve problems, as these problems were the source causing them stressed, by using several approaches. For example, six of staffs chose to confront the problems and tried to find the solution. Two staffs cited that they used their past experience to figure out how to deal with problems and stress. While another staff said that she would find the causation and then solve bit by bit. Similarly, two staffs stated that they would improve themselves by attending the training with the aim of increasing their abilities to handle problems more effectively:

"When I have a problem, I confront it. I don't like to talk to others especially if they are your coworkers, I don't think it's appropriate to do so (Front Desk staff 2, hotel D, personal communication, 9 February 2012)."

"First I will try to see what causing the problem. Then if I see that it comes from me, like I couldn't finish work on time or I couldn't speak English well, I will try to improve myself right away. I will find the course or training to take. But if that problem doesn't come from me, I will try to find other solutions to deal with it (Front Desk staff 2, hotel E, personal communication, 15 February 2012)."

Furthermore, 70 percent also stated that when they encountered the problems at work, they usually calmed themselves and tried to be optimistic, especially if that problem was associated to hotel guests. Meanwhile, 30 percent liked to talk with family or friends and 20 percent reported physical training like going to the gym as one way to cope with stress:

"When I'm stressed about work or guests, I just try to calm myself and keep thinking positive. For example, if the guest came to me and complaint, I would try to understand him by seeing things from his side (Front Desk staff 1, hotel A, personal communication, 25 January 2012)."

"I like to talk to my family and friends as well when I'm stressed because they know how to comfort me and I know they will always be on my side no matter what. I feel a lot better almost every time I have a word with them (Front Desk staff 2, hotel C, personal communication, 8 February 2012)."

"I sometimes go exercise or do something that I can get tired and I can fall sleep well at night so I don't' have to think about the problems (Front Desk staff 1, hotel C, personal communication, 8 February 2012)."

As results, the findings showed that individual could engage more than one coping style. Likewise, the approaches they used could be categorized into either problem-focused or emotion-focused coping style. In this case, problem-focused coping style referred to the way employees tried to manage the problems such as finding the cause and solving the problem. Whereas, the way employees tried to manage themselves in terms of feeling such as talking to others and being positive were considered as emotion-focused coping style.

4.3 Summary

The findings from both quantitative and qualitative data were found in the same direction. That most frequently encountered stress was from job and guests. Job stress was related to the characteristics such as being difficult, under high pressure/demand, workload, and imbalance work-life schedule. Meanwhile, the effects of work stress on job performance in overall were that it could negatively impact employees' job performance in terms of task and contextual performance. Moreover, most of hotel staffs thought that supportive programs or policies associating with work conditions and trainings were effective practices offered by hotels to reduce employees' stress level. Finally, coping styles used to deal with stress were both problem-focused and emotion-focused behaviors. Problem-focused approach was to confront and attempt to fix problems, whereas, emotion-focused approach was to be calm and positive.

CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

This research principally focused on hotel employees' work stress and its effect on job performance, and also how stress was managed by hotels and individuals. The sample composed of 58 front-line staffs for questionnaires and 15 Front Desk staffs for in-depth interviews, from five five-star hotels in Bangkok. The results of this study were discussed in accordance with the objectives, as detailed below.

5.1 Work stress

There were three types of work stress studied in this research: job, interpersonal, organization. The most frequently experienced work stress found were job-related and interpersonal-related stress. Regarding job itself, high pressure/demand and workload were the most reported as characteristics of front-line job which made those working in this position became stressful. As interviews, front-line staffs in hotel businesses were not only required to have several skills and knowledge to perform their job, but also they had to work cooperatively with many departments within hotel. Moreover, they needed to provide the best possible service to the guests since they worked for five-star hotel where standard was highly set, hence, this could easily generate stress for hotel staffs.

Meanwhile, interpersonal stress reported by hotel employees was primarily associated with guest problems rather than supervisors or coworkers. The reason may be that nature of hospitality business is dependent on guests in delivery of services (Law, Pearce, & Wood, 1995). Consequently, most of situations or activities are normally involved by guests. Especially front-line staffs, their job needs to deal directly face to face with customers. Therefore, it is comprehensible that guest-related stress was rated higher than other groups of people under interpersonal stress criterion.

These findings are very similar to the study of workers in Taiwan conducted by Lu (1999) which stating that heavy workload and interpersonal conflict were the most widespread problem in organizations. Furthermore, Ruyter, Wetzels, Feinberg (2001) also found that a variety of demands from a number of people in customer-oriented business simply produced conflict and stress for employees. As well as Kazmi, Amjad, Khan (2008), their study indicated that work overload and lack of cooperation from people at work were two of the main factors that causing stress. For this reason, the findings have supported several previous studies which showed that the major work stress was job- and interpersonal-related stress.

In addition, comparing researches conducted in Western and Eastern countries with this study, the findings were not that different. According to many Western studies (van Hooff, Geurts, Kompier, & Taris, 2007; Geurts & Sonnentag, 2006; De Lange, Taris, Kompier, Houtman, & Bongers, 2003; Sonnentag, 2001; Danna & Griffin, 1999; van der Doef & Maes, 1999), the findings agreed that working under high demand induced stress and affected employees' health problems. This study also reported that job characteristic: working under high pressure/demand was the primary causation generating stress. Similar to Liu (2002), the study found that heavy workload and interpersonal conflict were the common stressors for Western and Eastern employees. By this means, the results from this research supported the study by Liu that workers in Eastern country like Thailand also cited job characteristic: workload and interpersonal issue as the major factors producing work stress, as well as Westerners.

Nevertheless, organization-related stress was not recognized that much by employees in this study is probably because five-star hotel's brands in Thailand are generally operated under foreign hotel chains where clear policies and regulations have been set and strictly implemented, such as policies regarding to safe and security environment at workplace.

5.2 The effects of work stress on job performance

The majority of answers from hotel staffs about how work stress influenced their performance revealed that work stress negatively affected job

performance. This is in accordance with a lot of empirical researches which indicating stress as a threat or obstacle to achieve goals. For instance, in healthcare, Motowidlo, Packard, and Manning (1986) found a negative relationship between work stress and performance among nurses. Similar to a study of workers in Hong Kong by Siu (2003), it showed that higher level of job stress caused lower job performance. Moreover, regarding the models of relationship between stressors and job performance by Sullivan and Bhagat (1992), the findings from this research also fell into third model which described a negative linear relationship, meaning stress was seen as a difficulty and could lower job performance when stressors increased.

In this research, hotel staffs have reported the impacts of work stress in many ways as mentioned in Chapter 4. However, it is likely that work stress have affected hotel employees in terms of emotion the most, and then resulted in their job performance as responses towards their tasks. This could be an explanation of high rating in "other effects" from the survey. As many staffs admitted that they could not perform their work well when they got stressed, nonetheless, the interviews found that it was due to their feelings which influenced by stress and subsequently led to inability to concentrate on the tasks. For example, one staff said "When I'm stressed, it's hard for me to focus what I'm doing…" and another also mentioned "I cannot work 100% with the next guest if I get stressed". This is apparently clear that feelings play a key role in this perceiving stress process and have slightly more impacts on employees' task performance than contextual performance.

This result may be explained by some scholars' studies who called hospitality industry as emotional labor, owing to the requirement of being friendly and positive of staffs (Lashley, 2001). Since being front-line staffs, their tasks need to meet the customers at most of the time. Therefore, if their emotions are not in good mood, it can easily pass through their reactions, like body expression, towards customers. Later, this can be perceived as low job performance in delivering services since hotel employees are required to give warm welcome to the guest as well. Supported by a HR manager, he said "Stress absolutely affected employee's performance in a negative way. For those who work in Front, they will show it through their body expression…"

Besides, this finding has agreed with what Brymer (1982) and Zohar (1994) found earlier that if staffs are stressed or unhappy, these emotional feelings could convey to the services and poor quality may occur as a consequence. Additionally, emotion is also linked to individual's health (Richman, Kubzansky, Maselko, Kawachi, Choo, & Bauer, 2005) and this may be a causation that makes employee call for sick leave which could also affect job performance in terms of attendance which under contextual performance, as another HR pointed "Stress caused low performance in employee…And when they got too stressed, they became sick...Then, they will not come to work.". Therefore, despite the job performance focus, the effects caused by work stress can result into individuals' psychological, physiological, or the combination of both outcomes.

5.3 Stress management in hotels

Surprisingly, the study found that there was no any hotel initiating program with the purpose of stress management although the importance of stress has been considerably recognized by the management. Nonetheless, some activities and policies that were implemented by hotels in order to comply with hotel's standards, regulations, or other intentions have been agreed by employees that these activities or policies in some way could reduce stress. For instance, staff events and knowledge/skills trainings were perceived as effective practices to decrease stress level.

According to interviews, one staffs said "There were many activities that hotel offered, such as staff party, trips like going to temple and planting coral, and sport day. I think these activities can reduce my stress." As well as another one, he said "I like that they have a training session 2-3 times a month. I think it's effective in terms of reducing stress because after I trained, I got myself improve in those matters that I learned." It is understandable that these kinds of activities or programs can diminish employees' stress because they can be classified as secondary prevention of stress management intervention, since these activities attempt to reduce the harshness of stress before it gets to serious problems (Murphy & Sauter, 2003). Furthermore, these programs emphasize on employees and techniques to help individuals managing

or coping with stress. Also, they are the most common used in many organizations (Giga, Faragher, Cooper, & Noblet, 2003).

Likewise, these staff events and trainings can be regarded as stress management model since they aim to tackle the employee's assessment of stressful events and the employee's ability to cope with the effect of stress (Ivancevich, Matteson, Freedman, and Philliops, 1990). To clarify, recreation and leisure activities generally help decreasing stressful feeling towards the difficult circumstances which employees experience at work. Meantime, training sessions provided by hotels can increase employees' skills and knowledge so that employees can be able to handle problems related to work and perform job better. Thus, although all HR managers admitted that their hotels did not implement the actual stress management programs, but these activities which they mentioned could be implied as one of stress management interventions as well due to the literatures.

In addition, most of effective policies which reported by staffs were all related to work conditions such as supportive work environment, flexible work schedule, empowerment, and safety work climate. This finding has directed to the same way as the result in work stress part which showed that most frequently experienced stress was from job itself. Hence, it is reasonable that when hotels provided programs associating with the job, it would result to be effective practices. Although guest-related problem were reported high, but with the fact that guests are external factor to be controlled by hotel management, there would not be any policies related to guests in terms of stress management. Moreover, staffs have reported programs focused on individuals like consulting, physical training, and spiritual activities to be less effective than those related to work. This may be explained by the result from coping style which showed that staffs normally use their way to handle their emotional stress such as keeping themselves clam and being positive.

Therefore, it is suggested that hotel management should implement an actual stress management program and also emphasize on policies related to job or work conditions as they have been perceived to be effective methods in decreasing employees' stress. Moreover, these job-related activities can also be regarded as primary interventions of stress management since they attempt to adjust the source of work stress (Murphy & Sauter, 2003).

5.4 Hotel employees' coping styles

The purpose of investigating coping styles that being used by most employees is that to find out whether there are other ways of stress management which perceived to be effective and not yet provided by hotels. The result showed that staffs have reported highest mean score of problem-focused and emotion-focused comparatively the same. Therefore, it is likely that employees typically use both coping styles in order to deal with stress.

In accordance with a four–factor model of Chinese coping strategies developed by Siu, Spector and Cooper (2006), problem confrontation under problem-focused behavior and being optimistic under emotion-focused behavior are considered as active actions. This active action strategy is an attempt of putting more efforts and keeping positive attitude to cope with problems, which exactly what most of staffs in this study did to deal stress. Furthermore, the results found in the same study showed that active action had positive relationship with job performance in terms of attendance and job knowledge. Thus, this may explain why many front-line staffs reported low average score on absence and increase of problem-handling skill when using these coping styles.

Additionally, as interviews, both approaches could be applied at the same time or different time depending on the problems. For example, many staffs mentioned that they had to be positive-thinker to work in this field especially with the guests, whilst, they still had to fix the problems and made everyone happy. For this reason, besides stress management interventions related to work, it is suggested that the hotel management should look into cognitive-behavioral interventions to support its staffs' coping styles as well. This is because cognitive-behavioral interventions are the practices of teaching individuals to adapt their emotions and thoughts towards stressful events to positive or coherent way (Bellarosa & Chen, 1997), which are the same way that hotel employees have used. Therefore, the concentration of stress management related to job conditions as well as employee cognitive behavior may be the best practice for stress reduction in hotel business.

5.5 Summary

The findings from this research have supported several empirical studies' results conducted in the past. Regarding work stress, interpersonal matters and job characteristics such as high demand and workload are still the most common factors causing employee's stress in both Western and Eastern organizations. Concerning the effect of work stress on job performance, majority of staffs in this study has agreed that work stress negatively affected employees' job performance. Meaning that work stress was an obstacle, staffs were likely to perform job well when they encountered stress at workplace. In respect of stress management in hotels, although there was no report of an actual stress management program from any hotels, but several activities offered to employees can be considered as stress management interventions since these activities aim to reduce employees' stressful feelings and also provide employees with knowledge to cope with problems at work. Lastly, coping styles, staffs typically used both problem-focused behaviors such as confrontation and seeking more information about the problems, and emotion-focused behavior like thinking positively to deal with stress. Moreover, with the fact that most hotel employees attempted to put more effort to fix problems while maintain positive attitude, these two styles can also be regarded as active actions.

CHAPTER VI
RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This research is a mixed-method study, aiming to investigate types of work stress and its effects on job performance, stress management programs, and coping styles of employees in five-star hotels in Bangkok. The number of five-star hotels which agreed to participate in this study was five. The sample for quantitative method was 58 hotel staffs who working in Front Office Department, which were 24 males and 32 females with the average age of 32 years. For qualitative method, the sample was 15 employees which consisting of 10 Front Desk staffs and 5 Human Resource managers. Questionnaires and in-depth interviews were used as the instrument for data collection. The obtained quantitative data were analyzed by SPSS computer program for frequencies and descriptive statistics, meanwhile, the qualitative data were analyzed by content analysis technique. A summary of the main findings is presented in the following section, following by the recommendations, and finally implication for future study.

6.1 Conclusion

Regarding work stress, the most reported stressful situations in hotels were related to job and interpersonal issues. From descriptive statistics, characteristics of work stress that received highest score were working under high pressure/demand (M = 3.09, S.D. = 1.01), having too much work to do (M = 2.86, S.D. = 0.75), and dealing with unpleasant guest (M =2.74, S.D. = 0.95) consecutively. Supported by the qualitative data, every employee reported that job- and guest-related stress were work stress that they encountered the most. Guest-related stress was exampled by circumstances like being blamed and dealing with complaints. Meanwhile, job-related stress was described by hotel front-line staffs as high pressure and demand, busy, difficult, and long/imbalance working-hour job. Moreover, from HR managers'

perspective, the most frequently experienced work stress that staffs encountered in hotel business also associated with job attributes and interpersonal matters.

Concerning the effects of work stress on employees' job performance, every hotel management and majority of staffs agreed that work stress indeed has negative impacts on job performance. All HR managers demonstrated that employees who were stressed normally showed their attitudes and reactions in unfavorable ways, meaning this could affect their task performance due to the nature of hotel industry which required service-minded characteristic. Likewise, work stress could possibly lead to the decrease of individual's performance and organization as a whole if employees often called for sick leave or became unhealthy. Staffs as well, many of them stated that work stress affected their both physicality and mentality which resulted to the inability to work well such as having difficulty to finish tasks and being unmotivated to work. This means that work stress can affect both task and contextual performance. Also, these qualitative data were similar to the findings from questionnaires. The statistics showed that task performances like item 1: You are unable to perform tasks as well as you used to, your judgment is not as good as it was (M = 2.58, S.D. = 0.96) and item 2: You have difficulty to meet deadlines (M = 2.50, S.D. = 0.91) received the highest mean score on frequency, followed by other effects (M = 2.43, S.D. = 0.83), which the given explanations could fall into contextual performance since these effects related to employee's emotions as discussed in Chapter 5.

In respect of stress management in hotels, every HR managers in this study admitted that they have not initiated stress management programs in their hotels. Nevertheless, the hotels have provided several activities and programs which implemented with the purpose of indirectly reducing employees' stress. Agreed by employees, they addressed that many activities offered by hotels have effectively decreased their level of stress such as staff party, outing, sport day, and training. Even so, there were five programs/policies that perceived to be more effective than average level according to the survey. These five programs/policies consisted of item 7: Supportive work environment (M = 3.40, S.D. = 0.66), item 8: Balance or flexible work schedule (M = 3.40, S.D. = 0.77), item 6: Employee empowerment (M = 3.15, S.D. = 0.80), item 5: Friendly and safety work climate (M = 3.13, S.D. = 0.59), and

item 3: Skill and knowledge training (M = 3.09, S.D. = 0.76). By this means, most of effective programs which reported by hotel staffs were all related to work conditions, rather than recreation. This result goes along with the finding in work stress part which showed that most stressful events were from the job. Thus, this may imply that what hotel employees want for stress management programs is those connected to their job conditions. Nonetheless, although all hotels admitted that they did not conduct the actual stress management program for their employees, yet, these mentioned activities could be referred as stress management interventions owing to the literatures (Murphy & Sauter, 2003; Giga, Faragher, Cooper, & Noblet, 2003).

Lastly, about employees' coping styles, the study found that hotel staffs applied both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping style when dealing with stress. The most effective behavior for emotion-focused coping style was keeping positive, which also in according with quantitative data as it showed that item 7: I calm myself and keep positive obtained the highest perceived-effectiveness score (M = 3.59, S.D. = 0.73). On the other hand, the frequently used problem-focused coping styles were various behaviors, including problem confrontation, seeking information, getting trained, for example. Also, as a result of survey, the mean score of perceived-effectiveness in problem-focused items were higher than average, such as item 1: I confront the difficulties and problems (M = 3.50, S.D. = 0.60), item 3: I discuss the problems with supervisors and coworkers to find solution (M = 3.48, S.D. = 0.78), item 2: I seek more information about problems (M = 3.45, S.D. = 0.73), and item 4: I acquire knowledge or skills that could be useful in work and my life (M = 3.45, S.D. = 0.71).

6.2 Limitations

There are several limitations in this study that should be mentioned as follows.

a. Number of respondents

The number of participants in this study was quite small. There were 23 five-star hotels in Bangkok that have been contacted by researcher but only five hotels

agreed to join, which calculated as 22 percent. For this reason, the number of anticipated hotel staffs for questionnaire distribution reduced from 186 persons to 75 persons. Later, after checking for correctness, there were 58 questionnaires left in total to be studied in this research. Thus, the sample size may not be representative of hotel staffs population.

b. Front-line staffs

This research only collected data about stress and its effects on front-line staffs, particularly working in Front Office Department. With in fact, there are many front-line staffs who work under other departments which need to have a direct contact with guests as well, such as Housekeeping, Food & Beverage, and Sales Department. Moreover, stress experiences can be faced by all individuals regardless of position level. Thus, the findings in this study may not be applied to every hotel staff.

c. Five-star hotels: Multinational chain

Most of five-star hotels in Bangkok are multinational chain. Only a few hotels were Thai national chain. Therefore, there may be some differences in stress management practices between Thai and Multinational hotel chains. Furthermore, staffs working for these two types of hotel chains may be dissimilar in terms of personality, attitude, skill/knowledge, perception of stress, and coping styles, which could result in diverse findings.

d. Hotels other than five-star

This study only investigated work stress and its effects on job performance of employees who work for five-star hotels. As a result, the findings in this study may be limited for those hotels other than five-star. This is because hotel management teams generally have their policies, regulations, and strategies to operate business and manage employees in accordance with level of hotel star, therefore, this research may not be applied for hotels which have different star standard.

6.3 Recommendations

There are several recommendations from this research which have been divided into two parts. The first part was recommendations for hotel management. Meanwhile, the second part was recommendations for further study.

6.3.1 Hotel management

Based on the findings of this study, in order to manage work stress in hotel effectively and develop successful stress management programs which may result to the increase of hotel's overall performance, constancy of hotel's service quality, decrease of staff turnover, and positive brand image, strategies are recommended as follows.

1. Primarily focus on job-related stress

According to the results, work stress caused by job characteristics were one of the most mentioned elements in this research. Therefore, it is suggested that top managers should vigilantly consider and manage job conditions which associated to job distribution, responsibilities, schedule, and income, in order to alleviate those anticipated stress such as workload, excessive demands, imbalance work-life, and low payment. The reason that job-related stress should be mainly focused rather than another most frequently encountered stress, guest-related, is that job-related stress can be administered by hotel. Unlike guest-related problems, the hotel generally has no control of guests' behaviors or preferences. The activities commanding customers to do things, consequently, are unusual unless they violate hotel's regulations. Thus, the implement of policies like flexible work schedule, wage increase, or even recruiting more staffs, may be one of the solutions to decrease employees' stress.

2. Implement policies that related to work conditions

This recommendation is in accordance with the results in perceived-effectiveness concerning stress management activities in hotel. Staffs mostly agreed that hotel policies related to work conditions, such as supportive work environment, flexible work schedule, employee empowerment, and safety work climate, were

effective management in reducing stress comparing to other methods. Although, these policies are usually complied with organization's core values but the concentration in practice may not be given. As a result, this may explain why staffs mostly mentioned about recreation activities rather than work policies even those fun activities were rated lower than work policies. By this means, recreation is probably not always an answer for stress management, especially for those staffs who stated that they did not even have time to participate. Hence, hotel management should focus more on hotel policies associated to work conditions and ensure that those practices are recognized and carried out effectively.

3. Conduct an actual stress management program and continue to provide skills/knowledge trainings

Since there has not yet been an actual stress management program carrying out by any hotels, this study suggests that in order to tackle stress at workplace effective, there should be a proper program/intervention designed for stress management in hotels with the primary purpose of reducing employees' stress. Similarly, from findings, skills and knowledge trainings were one of the most effective stress management practices that have been reported in both quantitative and qualitative data. This is probably because problems causing stress were frequently come from work. As discussed, not only job itself was difficult but the questionnaires also showed that some staffs were under-skilled and resulted to low job performance. However, many employees stated that they successfully used their past experiences to deal with work stress. Therefore, trainings should be essential programs for every hotel since the research showed that it could decrease employees' stress due to ability to perform the job well after being trained. In addition, most of guests who staying at these five-star hotels were foreigners, so the problems may come from cross-cultural issues since the majority of staffs were Thai people. Hence, conducting training sessions that teach successful model on how to handle different background of guests and also other problems related to customers from experienced employees may be useful.

4. Strengthen internal marketing

As findings, job and interpersonal issues were reported as the major work stress for hotel staffs. This is probably that employees did not feel that they were treated, motivated, and empowered enough by the hotel management. Moreover, these hospitality jobs require service-minded employees who are willing to deliver an excellent experience to guests. Thus, HR personnel should strengthen internal marketing in order to create service culture and make employees realize that they are part of the hotel teams and services that need to work together to satisfy customers.

To illustrate, this internal marketing can start from recruiting stage by selecting candidate with the right attitude by considering the connective, affection such as loving kindness for guests, and behavior of that person as well as other job requirements whether it fits well with the work. Then, job compensation such as welfares and benefits should be taken into account since many employees have mentioned about workload and low payment. Consequently, policies and trainings should be implemented in accordance with those attitude requirements. Particularly, training should be given to staffs before the job starts in order to fulfill staffs' skills so that they will be able perform the job well and become less stressed. Additionally, parents and child psychology may be applied as one of the theories when creating a training class to train employees to think that customers are like their children who they should serve with loves and cares. Furthermore, these policies and training sessions can be one of the quality control processes to ensure that employees' pride and citizenship behaviors are recognized within hotels. Lastly, consultation may be available to facilitate hotel staffs that seriously undergo stressful state or other problems.

It is imperative that every hotel management should pay attention to their employees and treat them as their own customers because it is unlikely that an excellent service will be delivered to hotel guests if those who delivering the service are not happy.

6.3.2 Further study

Further studies are needed to investigate work stress and its effects in hospitality industry for the better understanding. Since the importance of work stress is notable and its consequences are enormous, but only few researches have been carried out. Moreover, most of previous empirical studies related to work stress were about healthcare or blue-collar workers, not much in workers of hospitality business. In addition, owing to limitation of this research, there was only five hotels participated and consequently the number of respondents were quite small. Moreover, this study took place in five-star hotels which mainly were multinational hotel chains and focused only on front-line staffs who working in Front Office Department. By this means, findings from this research may not be applied for all hotels. Therefore, it is suggested that future study should be conducted in a bigger number of participants, with various positions if possible, and also more diverse level of hotel star and chain, in order to compare the similarity and differences which may be used for an initiative to implement the best practice of stress management programs for hospitality business.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

All information that you provide will be used in the strictest confidence. Take your time, but please be completely honest with your answers. Thank you.

SECTION A: PERSONAL DATA
A1.   Gender
              1) Male   2) Female

A2.   Age   _____

SECTION B: WORK STRESS
Definition: work stress refers to the characteristics of organizational context which perceived by individuals that they are difficult or beyond individuals' abilities to handle**.**

Instructions:
- Think about how often you encounter the following job characteristics/situations and check the appropriate frequency.
- If the following situations are not stressor to you, please choose "N/A".

Scoring: 5=Constantly, 4=Usually, 3=Occasionally, 2=Rarely, 1=Never

Characteristics/Situations	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Job :						
1) Being over-skilled or under-skilled for the job						
2) Having too much work to do						
3) Lack of autonomy or job control						
4) Unclear roles or job responsibilities						
5) Working under high pressure and demand						
6) Receiving low rate payments or less income than expected						
7) Imbalance work-life or conflicting demands of work and home						
Interpersonal:						
8) Working with inconsiderate or unsupportive supervisors						
9) Having conflicts with co-workers or managers						
10) Dealing with unpleasant guests						
11) Bullying, harassment, or violence from guests or						

	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
other employees						
12) Lack of cooperation from colleagues						
Organization:						
13) Poor communication within department/organization						
14) Poor management within department/organization						
15) Poor leadership						
16) Unfair performance evaluation systems						
17) Unclear organizational policies						
18) Having problems with organizational culture						
19) Unsafe or unfriendly workplace environment						
20) Other work stressors if any (please specify and score)						

SECTION C: EFFECT OF WORK STRESS ON JOB PERFORMANCE
Instructions:
- Think about how work stress affects your job performance.
- If the following actions are not applied to you, please check "N/A".
-

Scoring: **5= Strongly agree, 4= Quite agree, 3= Agree somewhat, 2= Not really agree, 1= Strongly disagree**

Due to work stress:	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Task Performance:						
1) You are unable to perform tasks as well as you used to, your judgment is not as good as it was.						
2) You have difficulty to meet deadlines.						
3) You are unable to fulfill the tasks and responsibilities of your job.						
4) You have difficulty to make effective oral and written communication clear and easy to understand.						
5) You are less attentive to detail and accuracy.						
Contextual Performance:						
6) You tend to have frequent arguments with superiors, co-workers, or guests.						
7) You feel unmotivated or less committed to your work.						
8) You are unlikely to interact with others in a helpful and informative manner.						
9) You often call for sick leave or ask for day off						

	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
10) Other effects if any (please specify and score)						

SECTION D: EVALUATION OF HOTEL'S STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Instructions:

- Answer whether the hotel offers the following programs. If yes, please indicate how you perceive the effectiveness of the program. If not, please choose "N/A".

Scoring: **5= Very effective, 4= Quite effective, 3= Average, 2= Not really effective, 1= Not effective at all**

Stress management programs/policies	Perceived-effectiveness					N/A
	5	4	3	2	1	
1) Physical training, exercise, or gym membership						
2) Spiritual/Religious activities						
3) Skill and knowledge training						
4) Professional consultation (i.e. counselor or psychologist)						
5) Friendly and safety work climate						
6) Employee empowerment						
7) Supportive work environment						
8) Balance or flexible work schedule						
9) Social events						
10) Stress management training						
11) Other programs (please specify and score)						

D1. Are there any programs/policies which you would like the hotel to provide in order to lessen your work stress? If yes, please describe.

SECTION E: INDIVIDUALE COPING STYLES
Instructions:
- Indicate how you usually deal with work stress and how you perceive the effectiveness of these coping styles by using a number 1 to 5 as section D and "N/A" if behaviors are not applied to you.

Coping behaviors	Perceived-effectiveness					
	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Problem-focused:						
1) I confront the difficulties and problems.						
2) I seek more information about problems.						
3) I discuss the problems with supervisors and coworkers to find solution.						
4) I acquire knowledge or skills that could be useful in work and my life.						
5) I manage problems by changing the elements which cause stress.						
Emotion-focused:						
6) I ask for advice/support from others.						
7) I calm myself and keep positive.						
8) I look for comfort in a belief in a power greater than myself such as praying.						
9) I get away from the problems.						
10) I do nothing.						

Suggestions:

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********** *Thank you very much for your time and cooperation* **********

APPENDIX B
CHECKLIST FOR KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW

I. Checklist for Human Resources Manager

Date _____ Place_____

Start time _____ End Time_____

Name of Respondent _____

Hotel _____

1. How important do you think work stress is?

2. How do you consider work stress in your hotel?

3. How important do you think stress management programs/policies are?

4. What do you think about the effect of work stress on employees' job performance? In which ways?

5. Does your hotel provide any stress management programs or implement any policies with the purpose of reducing employees' work stress?

    - If yes:

        o Please describe which programs/policies your hotel has.

        o What do you think about those programs/policies? Are they effective? Why/Why not?

        o How do you evaluate the programs/policies?

        o What are the factors that have been put in consideration when conduction programs/policies?

    - If no, please explain why your hotel does not have ones.

II. Checklist for Front-Line Employee

Date _____ Place_____

Start time _____ End Time_____

Name of Respondent _____

Hotel _____

1. How do you feel about your job?

2. Have you encountered any stress related to your job? If yes, please describe what kind of stress?

3. How do you usually deal with the problems at work?

4. How does work stress affect your job performance? Positive/Negative?

5. Does your hotel provide any stress management programs or implement any policies with the purpose of reducing your stress from work?

   - If yes:

     o What do you think about those programs/policies? Are they effective? Why/Why not?

     o How do you evaluate the programs/policies?

6. Are there any programs/policies you wish to have? If yes, what are they and how do you think those programs/policies will help you?

7. What do you think about the management of hotel in terms of employees' work stress?

8. How would you suggest the hotel management in terms of possibilities to increase your job performance?

BIOGRAPHY

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