

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Canon Marketing (Thailand) Co., Ltd or CMT, established in 1994, is the subsidiary of Canon Incorporation Japan and has more than 400 employees. The company is dedicated to meet customer's satisfaction. Furthermore, CMT continues to market a comprehensive range of digital imaging equipment such as digital cameras, compact cameras, laser and inkjet printers, scanners, and projectors, and office solutions such as copiers with a team of direct sales personnel and a network of more than 118 dealers throughout Thailand. It also has 11 service centers to provide comprehensive customer service to Canon users.

The company is a medium firm. It is divided into many divisions mainly based on 3 major products of the company which are camera (Image Communication Products division), printer and scanner (Consumer System Products division), and copier and fax (Business Imaging Solution division). Furthermore, there are supporting divisions or back offices such as Finance & Accounting, Information Technology, Business Administration, Human Resources, Corporate Communication, and General Affairs division. To achieve the company's goal, the staff have to be responsible for the job they are assigned the best they can. In other words, not only do they have to satisfy their customers, but they also have to care for their colleagues.

However, as there are various divisions or departments within the company, one of its major problems is interpersonal conflicts. The conflicts are resulted from many causes; for example, a boss who unreasonably criticizes his/her subordinates' efforts or who makes unmanageable demands, a colleague who exceeds their authority or who excludes their team members from information, or a client who makes excessive demands on our time (Edelmann, 1993, p. 2). As a result, these conflicts contribute to employee's stress.

Stress is a mental and physical condition which affects an individual's effectiveness, productivity, personal health, and work quality. It can provide a positive and negative result depending on its degree. If staff are able to cope with

stress any way they can, they will turn it into assertiveness, problem-solving, conflict management, empathy, and forgiveness. However, too much stress leads to health problems such as headaches, upset stomach, ulcers, rashes, insomnia, high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke. Moreover, people experiencing stress for a long time tend to suffer from feelings of distrust, rejection, anger, and depression.

Worst still, a stressful working environment in the workplace can affect both the employee's performances and the organization's health and effectiveness. It increases absenteeism, tardiness, bias, lack of cooperation, and the employees' tendency to quit their jobs. Therefore, it would be useful for the organization to find out the stress level, factors, and coping strategies for its staff.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1.2.1 How do Canon Marketing (Thailand)'s employees cope with stressful situations caused by superiors, colleagues, and customers?

1.2.2 What degree do Canon Marketing (Thailand)'s employees experience stressful situations caused by superiors, colleagues, and customers?

1.2.3 Which group causes the most stress?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1.3.1 To reveal the strategies for coping with stressful situations caused by each group (supervisors, colleagues, and customers).

1.3.2 To explore the level of stress caused by supervisors, colleagues, and customers of Canon Marketing (Thailand)'s employees.

1.3.3 To find out which group causes the most stress.

1.4 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

The definitions of the terms of this study are as follows:

Stress levels is the score derived from having Canon Marketing (Thailand) staff make self-analysis on their stressful situations caused by their superiors, their colleagues, and their customers. There are 4 stress levels in the measurement: much

lower than normal level, normal stress level, moderately higher than normal stress level, and higher than normal level.

Stressor is the actual event which produces a demand or stress on an individual.

Coping Strategies are an individual's efforts to handle the stress, no matter whether the efforts are successful, e.g. consulting someone about distress, trying to figure the solution while facing a problem, and so on. This research uses only 3 main groups of coping strategies to analyze the subjects which are problem-focused, social support and avoidance coping strategies.

Supervisors are employees of Canon Marketing (Thailand) in the position of Senior Supervisor, Assistant Manager, Manager, and Director.

Colleagues are employees who work in different functions and have to coordinate with their supervisors, colleagues, and customers as their job responsibility.

Customers are people who purchased the products of the company and requested for after-sales service.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The factors studied in this research are limited to only stressful situations caused by three groups of people (supervisors, colleagues, and customers), stress levels and coping strategies of Canon Marketing (Thailand)'s employees. The background variables of the staff are not studied.

The framework of this survey research includes stress levels as the independent variables, and 3 coping strategies as dependent variables.

Stress is divided into 4 levels as follows:

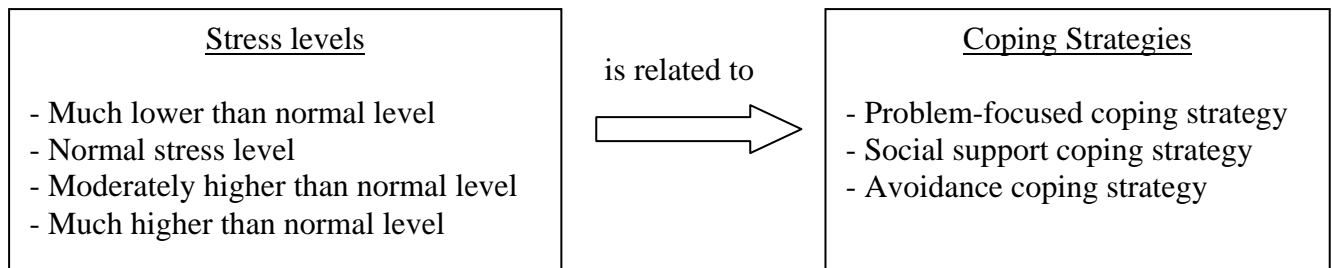
1. Much lower than normal stress level (no stress)
2. Normal stress level (mild stress)
3. Moderately higher than normal stress level (moderate stress)
4. Much higher than normal stress level (severe stress)

Dependent variables are 3 coping strategies:

1. Problem-focused coping
2. Seeking social support coping

3. Avoidance coping

Correlation of the variables is shown below:



1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

High amounts of stress lead to the poor performance and health of employees, which will eventually result in the low performance of the organization. The results of the study will be very useful for the organization to find out the stress levels, causes, and coping strategies of Canon Marketing (Thailand)'s employees. Consequently, the company can use the findings as a guideline to boost job satisfaction and working relationship in order to increase efficiency and productivity in the workplace.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This paper is divided into five chapters. The first chapter consists of the background, objectives, scope, and significance of the study. The second chapter describes the review of related literature. The methodology of this study is presented in the third chapter. The fourth chapter covers the findings and analysis of results. The last chapter presents a summary of all the details of the study including discussions and conclusions of the findings and also recommendations for further study.