

“Understanding Stress”: Comparing between US, Japanese and Thai management styles

Krit Jarinto, Full-time Instructor, Graduate school of commerce, Burapha University, Thailand

ABSTRACT

This research aims to discover the effect of positive and negative stress on job satisfaction and illness comparing between US, Japanese and Thai management styles. Paper emphasizes on qualitative data analysis with Atlas ti program as a tool. The results of the quantitative analysis were used as a guideline to interview managers. This research reveals that utilize positive stress (motivation or challenge) to improve job satisfaction and try to decrease negative stress which effect to illness. The study suggest that Employee Assistant programs (ESP) is suitable for the organizations and interview as a tool will discover the root of the problem and open communication throughout of the organization.

Keywords: *Positive stress, Negative stress, Job satisfaction, Illness, and Management styles*

INTRODUCTION

Stress is a feeling that happens to anybody, any gender, and any profession. It is a general phenomenon that can regularly develop in people’s daily life, and it is hard to avoid stress. Stress is a pressure which causes mental uneasiness, mental disturbance and loss of self balance in person and, as a result, drives a change in people’s behavior. Causes leading to job stress usually consist of inappropriate work environment such as narrow and congested workplace, poor ventilation system, disturbing noise while working, job overload, unclear or vague job role and responsibilities, poor relationship among colleagues, lots of rules and regulations, lack of career growth opportunity, including the nature of work itself which maybe too risky or tiresome. All of these can give rise to stress.

Due to their huge presence in Thailand, Japanese and the U.S. multinational firms have sent expatriate managers to oversee their businesses. The leadership of these expatriates is thus important to the success of businesses. They not only need to be able to successfully manage the internal environments they oversee through the regulations of such functions as capital budgeting, project management, cost control, human resource management, etc, but also be adept at managing cultural differences that, in turn, influence leadership styles, norms, role expectations, and traditions governing the relationship among various members of society. Leaders of multinational enterprises need to respond effectively to the dynamics of their own organizational culture, the multicultural staff, and the country culture in which they are based.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study has two objectives: first, to investigate positive and negative stress on job satisfaction of Thai middle managers led by US, Japanese, and Thai senior management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Selye, the father of stress (1974) divided stress into two stressors as follows:

1. Negative stress or distress means the individual experiences negative emotions as anxiety or worry perhaps upon retiring. Physical effects may follow such as headaches or diarrhea.

Positive stress or eustress pertains to an exciting event stimulating a person to feel glad or happy as a bride, before the marriage ceremony. She is so happy and she cannot sleep.

2. Negative stress also causes economic and social losses, especially for businesses. These losses come from ineffective work due to sickness which decreases both time at work and profit. Furthermore, people who suffer from negative stress often apply ineffective methods to seek release from it such as drinking, smoking, taking drugs, and shopping. Some employees have indulged themselves in gambling, and some have committed suicide (Mehri, 2000)

Stress has a positive side called eustress that is less well-known and less frequently used in colloquial language. Eustress or “good stress” refers to a psychological response to a stressor that is interpreted as having positive implications for well-being, according to Selye (1983). Distress and eustress represent distinct constructs and are not at opposite ends of a continuum (i.e., the lack of distress does not indicate the presence of eustress; (Quick, 1997).

According to Simmons (2000), positive stress and negative stress cannot be definitely separated. They are mixed together like water in a bathtub. Positive stress is like cold water whereas negative stress is like hot water. When hot and cold water is filled into a bathtub it will be combined and the water temperature will be determined by the quantity of hot and cold water. Also Simmon found eustress consists of positive affect, meaningfulness, manageability, and hope. Distress consists of negative affect, job alienation, anxiety, and anger/hostile.

Job Satisfaction

An employee satisfaction inventory (ESI) was found to be an important tool to measure job satisfaction and employee's physical and mental health (Koustelios and Bagiatis 1997)

Psychologist and management consultant Frederick Herzberg developed the two factor theory of motivation. The two factors are hygiene and motivator factors. Herzberg's study comes from a group of 200 accountants and engineers. Herzberg and Synderman (1959) concluded that,

1. Extrinsic conditions, namely pay, status, job security, working conditions, fringe benefits, policies and interpersonal relations do not positively influence worker motivation, but enable the worker to avoid dissatisfaction with the work.
2. Intrinsic conditions, namely feelings of achievement, experiencing meaningful work, opportunities for advancement, recognition, and opportunities to grow, influence the motivation of employees to work hard because they bring satisfaction to the workers.

US Management Style

The US management style has been called the International Organization Model. The key objective is to transfer knowledge and expertise to subsidiaries adapted to the cultural environments. The subsidiaries are usually less advanced in technology or market development. While the headquarters gives strategic plans to subsidiaries to coordinate and follow, these plans need to be in alignment with the culture within which subsidiaries exist. For this to happen, it is necessary for the corporate headquarters to learn about the organization culture from employees in the subsidiaries (Christopher, 2002).

According to Christopher, the US Management style provides the channels for a flow of information between the subsidiaries and corporate officers. On the other hand, headquarters also give opportunities for subsidiaries to create new products and strategies for themselves.

The Japanese management Style

The Japanese management style has been called a Global Organization Model. Its global strategies are based on a centralization of assets, resources, and responsibilities in order to achieve economic of scale. The role of subsidiaries is to produce, assemble and sell, but headquarters determines the goals, roles, policies, and procedures with little adaptation from the subsidiaries (Christopher, 2002).

Christopher concludes overseas subsidiaries depend on the corporate office for resources and directions with tight control. So, Japanese subsidiaries have little independence.

Thai management Style

In Thai organization, position, title, rank, and status are very importance because Thai employees accept the power of superior or paternalistic management style (Komin, 1990). The high power distance create Thai context structure which influences by values and perceptions (Thanasakit, 1999)

Klausner (1981), Komin (1990), and Holmes & Tangtongtavy (1995) found that Thai management style come from four values;

1. *Pu Yai (high position or authority-power)* he or she involves in decision-making in organization and the other believed in knowledge, experience, and responsibility.
2. *Kreng Jai (considerate)* subordinate try not to bother a person who is higher rank in sense of psychological respect.
3. *Face Saving (criticism avoidance)* Face means “ego”. Face saving is very dominant role in Thai culture. Thais avoid criticizing or insulting seniority in front of the third party.
4. *Bun Khun (indebted goodness)* Mutual bond or reciprocal relationship between the given and the received should be returned no matter of time and distance.

Cross culture Management

One of the most widely referenced approaches for analyzing variables among cultures has been done by Greet Hofstede (1980 and 1983). He surveyed more than 116,000 IBM managers and employees in 40 countries and found they tend to vary on five value dimensions of national culture:

1. Power distance. The degree people in a country accept that power in institutions, organizations, and societies is unequal. It ranges from relatively equal (low power distance) to extremely unequal (high power distance).
2. Individualism versus Collectivism. Individualism is a cultural attribute with a loose social framework in which people look out for and care mostly for themselves.
3. Masculine versus Feminine. Masculinity pertains to a cultural value in which social gender roles are clearly distinct. Men are expected to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success. Women are expected to be sweet, kind, and motherly.
4. Uncertainty avoidance. In cultures with strong uncertainly avoidance, people come across as busy, fidgety, emotional, aggressive, and active. In cultures with weak uncertainly avoidance, people give the impression of being quiet, easy-going, and patient.

5. Long-term versus Short-term. People in cultures with a long-term orientation look to the future and value thrift and persistence. A short-term orientation values the past and present. It emphasizes respect for tradition and tends to seek instant gratification.

These differences have been helpful in explaining and predicting behavior of employees from various countries. (see table below) For example, in terms of Japanese and American and Thai citizens, Americans are socialized to be individualistic. In contrast, Japanese and Thai are indoctrinated with “team play” and to work in groups. American education is to learn to think, analyze and ask questions. Japanese and Thai, on the other hand, tend to prefer to listen, trust, receive orders and work as a team. The Thais tend to be even more passive than the Japanese. The average US worker is more competitive and self-focused than the Japanese worker. Thai workers tend to take less initiative than the Japanese. He wants to think for himself and does not want to blindly follow orders. Japanese and Thai employees prefer not to stand out from the group and want to be rewarded as a group ordinarily. These differences in socialization practices have significantly different results in each country’s employees.

Cultural Dimension table

Country	Power Distance	Individualism	Masculine	Uncertainly Avoidance	Long-term Orientation
Japan (Rank)	Moderate (33)	Moderate (22/23)	High (1)	High (7)	Moderate (4)
USA (Rank)	Low (38)	High (1)	High (15)	Low (43)	Low (17)
Thailand (Rank)	Moderate (21/23)	Low (39/41)	Low (44)	Moderate (30)	Moderate (8)

Source: Adapted from G. Hofstede (February 1993). “Cultural Constraints in Management Theories” *Academy of Management Excusiv*, p 91.

RESEACH DESIGN

This research used qualitative analysis applied to in depth interviews for data collection together with quantitative analysis of questionnaires. The objective in using both analysis methods and hybrid experimental analysis is to obtain results with higher reliability and validity values. Thus, the results of the quantitative analysis were used as a guideline for the interviews. Thus, this study is part of the full dissertation. Thirty middle managers worked in multinational corporations more than 5 years on average, ten of which were reporting to US senior management, ten of which were reporting to Japanese senior management, and the other ten managers reporting Thai senior management. These all managers expressed very similar ideas. Each interview took about one and a half hour to two hours. Semi-structural questions were asked equally of all interviewees. When there were any interesting points, the interviewer would question deeper and use the answers to check for consistency with quantitative data. The interviews were voice recorded and only essential points that responded to the questions are included in this research and then quotations and coding link into network view were applied with Atlas ti program trial version.

In doing each interview, the researcher explained to the interviewee the objectives of the research including the definition of each code. Then the researcher requested the interviewee to give demographic information and the management characteristics of the organization before asking six semi-structured questions. The six questions are the following.

- 1.your opinion, is there positive stress in your organization? Which variables are key factors? Explain each factor with an example.
- 2.your opinion, is there negative stress in your organization? Which variables are key factors? Explain each factor with an example.
- 3.your opinion, is there job satisfaction in your organization? Which variables are key factors? Explain each factor with an example.
- 4.your opinion, is there illness in your organization? Which variables are key factors? Explain each factor with an example.
- 5.your organization, what do you think is the relationship among positive stress, negative stress, job satisfaction and illness?
6. the time of stress, how do you decrease or manage your stress?

RESULTS

Result was presented by issue-based approach.

Management style

Mr. USA

Both merit and patronage systems are usually practiced in companies led by U.S. leaders. In terms of the management style, senior management tends to adapt themselves to Thai culture. For example, most employees are recruited through employee referrals. I joined this company upon persuasion of an acquaintance when there was a vacant position.

U.S. Management tends to encourage participative decision making, free expression of opinions or arguments without bias, brainstorming and the discussion of rational decisions, before taking action. People are usually promoted based on their competence and their actual contribution.

Overall, Mr. USA finds satisfaction in the management style. He experiences his manager as unbiased. He stated, "I think the manager understands me and accepts everyone's is opinion equally "

In addition, she said, some Thai workers have not adapted themselves to foreign culture. For example, "In the meeting they do not give comments but afterwards would discuss with friends about the pros and cons outside the meeting." "Those who could not adapt themselves would quit after a while," she added.

In working with U.S. management, Thai staffs tend not to tell the truth. For example, "In production department, if production target is 100 pieces, but 2 pieces are damaged they will report that productivity is 100% without damage. This causes the management to make false analysis."

The U.S. senior management does not keep a strict eye on employees' behavior. For example, "He will not care about how many cups of coffee you are drinking per day or how much time you take for smoking. But, he will work attentively with an emphasis on the work output giving good motivation."

Miss Japan

The company comprises both Japanese and Thai workers. The corporate policy and goal is laid out by Japanese senior management while Thai staff give ideas, make analysis, and implement the plans to achieve the company's goals under the supervision and consultancy of the headquarters in Japan. Japanese staff will lay out the plans and the organizational systems with close supervision to ensure the same working standard as in Japan.

Conflicts arise from the different ways of thinking between Thai managers and Japanese executives. Thai executives manage this Thai subsidiary under a family system while Japanese are economical and very active in work. Japanese companies, most of which produce high quality products, place emphasis on manufacturing which is their outstanding strength.

Miss. Japan used to work in a Thai company. She revealed that it is Thai people's habits to compromise while in Japanese companies people fiercely compete for promotion and salary increase.

Miss Thai

Managed under the family business system, the company has some disadvantages. The owner's satisfaction is the most important thing. Whenever the employees displease him, they will be fired. I experienced one case myself. An employee was called in front of the legal staff and was fired. Compensation pay was written right at the moment. In some cases, owner's dislike of an employee's personality may cause the firing. The owner prefers white complexion (Asian) and slim persons because he once said that fat people tend to be lazy like pigs.

The company management is individually centralized and the merit system is utilized. Presently, the working system is universal but in earlier times patronage system was adopted.

The U.S. management style concentrates on the merit system and appraisal depends on employee competencies. Japanese management style concentrates on centralization. The employees should follow orders and respect seniority. Thai management style concentrates on patronage and informal relationships. The employees help each other and have sympathy towards co-workers.

Positive and Negative Stress

Miss USA

Positive Stress

In the US style, senior management prefers to give repeated encouragement. For example, The CEO would say "good job like a coach of a sports team encouraging teammates to play in accordance with its plan. Employees are often stimulated to work with enthusiasm. If one does not do "a good job", senior management says, you did a good job but you should improve on which I think will yield a better result.

This serves as both encouragement and advice. On the other hand, Japanese senior management will be very straightforward and reproach directly. For example, why haven't you done a perfect job with no mistakes before submitting it? It is Japanese senior management's belief that a perfect job will save time from making corrections.

To work in a US company, employees are encouraged to have continuous self development plan in order to become successful or they will be evaluated as a "Brownie"(note 1), the lowest level of in an organization.

Negative Stress

Miss USA who in her career reported to Japanese and now US senior management had this to say about her Japanese experience:

Though Japanese working style creates negative stress more than US style, an advantage is that whenever senior management realizes different capabilities and characteristics of employees, they will try to make improvement. My boss tended to observe my behavior looking for my weak points, then tried to teach me or dispatch me to a training course expecting me to work successfully after training.

Mr. Japan

Mr. Japan explained that he was not a salary man during his beginning period of work.

I had my time card punched at 8:00 am and finished work at 2:30 pm during the first 2 years. When I became a salary man I devoted myself to work as I had a lot of duties and responsibilities. I arrived at the office about 6:00-6:30 am and left the office around 9:00 pm. I had to work harder as I got a higher position. Most of the jobs were daily routine jobs that would affect the next day if the previous day's job was unfinished. It is necessary for me to start working earlier than usual because of the time difference in Japan which is 2 hours ahead of Thailand. Employees in this section need to start work earlier than others to be in contact with Japanese Headquarters.

Positive Stress

Positive drive is very important for Mr. Japan. He stated proudly,

I want to be recognized by all in the organization, so I once proposed a new working approach in a meeting. But it was rejected by the management who suggested I finish my master degree first. Now that I've finished my study, it's time I come to prove myself. During the past year I've managed to decrease several million Baht worth of cost.

Negative Stress

Management's unfairness has led to employees' anxiousness and stress. Influential support for particular employees has caused management obstacles and problems. Mr. Japan continues,

These people have privileges or are treated as Very Important Persons (VIP) in the organization. They are allowed to violate the rules and regulations. I am very tense at work to ensure my actions do not negatively affect them.

Miss Thai

Positive stress

Miss Thai apparently does not have much knowledge or skills on the computer. When senior management wants some data quickly to evaluate the situation she becomes tense. "I seek to improve necessary skills and work harder to get the work done. I won't let myself be blamed in any case." Her statement indicates her tenseness moves her to work smarter and harder.

Negative Stress

I'm worried that I may be fired one day without warning or fault." "I know a person previously fired. He was a manager and served here over 10 years. His only fault was that he unfortunately was on a vacation when the owner was really in need of him.

Employees in this company do not have a clear job description. The management often assigns them extra jobs which make them feel stressful, uneasy, and unwilling to work. This ambiguity has greatly confused the employees.

There is discrimination among middle level employees, low level employees and senior management. Senior management has enormous power, and orders employees to do what they want.

Positive and negative stress usually occurs to employees in every company. Although, employees experience and respond to stress differently, the key is how senior management understands and looks for the root of stress uniqueness.

It appears that the Thai middle management perceives that they experience more positive stress from senior US management than from Japanese senior management. Usually, this positive stress is due to US senior management giving more challenging work opportunities together with encouragement. US managers appear to express confidence in the Thai middle managers. High expectation and belief in Thai middle manager's abilities seem to result in a positive stress experience for them.

In terms of negative stress, Japanese senior management tends to want perfection and accept no excuses for failure. This behavior results in nervousness and anxiety. Japanese managers also seem to demand that Thai middle managers work long hours until projects are completed similar to Japanese management's behaviors with little regard to balancing work life with one's family life.

Thai middle managers who report to Thai senior management experience negative stress based on fear of being fired for reasons other than poor performance. It seems the personality of the leader is a major factor in Thai middle managers experiencing fear. In addition, job expectations are not always clear so middle managers do not always know what good performance, in the eyes of his or her manager, looks like.

Job Satisfaction

Miss USA

Japanese firms pay more attention to satisfaction in the workplace than US firms, using Kaizen (note2) concept in placing an emphasis on work efficiency and safety. With regard to performance appraisal, employees reporting to U.S. senior management are required to write down their 3-month, 1-year, and 3-year objectives that will improve the company while monthly evaluations are conducted by Japanese senior management.

Furthermore, Japanese firms adopt 5S (note 3) scheme to improve the working environment. "The workplace is very clean and tidy and, in particular, friendly to the environment." This is different from US firms where less attention is placed on orderliness.

Managers in the US system will be assigned both routine and project work. For routine work, they need to fulfill their responsibilities as indicated in the job specifications or job description. Special projects are allocated to managers to challenge their capability and skills. Japanese managers concentrate on routine jobs while modifying some work procedures for improved productivity, but the principles remain unchanged.

As for the organizational aspect, Japanese senior management does not prefer rotation. "Japanese managers are always bred on bonsai. (note 4)" But Japanese senior managers from 35-40 years of age have a different vision. They design more rotations but only among those jobs related to the previous ones.

Japanese organizational culture is unique in respect to seniority. "It is a customary practice to greet seniors first." This is regarded as the way to honor each other. Therefore, the young generation needs to learn how to behave using good manners, how to express their face.

Regarding job progress, the US style is called "climbing plant" which means managers are given a chance to be promoted to a higher position based on their capability regardless of service length. Other qualifications required are self confidence, creative thinking, preference for challenging jobs and knowledge sharing with people in the organization.

Mr. Japan

In terms of Mr. Japan's perception of job satisfaction, he says

My job satisfaction is at maximum level. If the rating is from 1-5, I'll give 5. This company is big, widely-known, and has gained recognition from the general public.

Most employees express fair satisfaction which suggests they do not want to lose face because the quantitative data suggests the opposite.

The overall organization shares the same characteristics as others that problems are caused by management. I believe that the reason why most employees resign is their inability to get along with or work together with the management...

In addition, employees separate themselves into groups.

When I first joined the company I was asked which side I was going to take. I chose neither of them so I was distrusted by both sides. There were few who chose to take the middle path. The disadvantage is that I received support from neither of them...

As for the growth and development, an annual competency test for promotion is given as well as training programs all through the year. But there is some question of fairness "I noticed that those who passed the test have big family names or good back-up (note 6) even though employees of the same family name are prohibited from working in the same department."

Miss Thai

Miss Thai is motivated by good colleagues that have helped her to concentrate on her job. "There is no bias and no separation among colleagues. Everybody extends good cooperation with very little conflict within the organization."

Miss Thai's job satisfaction level is quite high. She expects to be able to grow and get promoted to a higher position. She wants to be recognized by others as an effective worker. Her manager gives her good support.

The workplace environment, however, is not very hygienic. Office equipment and the IT system are outsourced from a third party. PC sets are changed every 3 years. "The company does not buy any computer sets or accessories, but uses rented ones. The advantage is that we always have up to date IT equipment for use."

The company pays a moderate remuneration. Employees perceive that they "work hard, but are paid less." This quote supports the quantitative data. Some employees work overtime without pay. Bonus payment depends on profitability of each department. At present, employees have been consistently trained and encouraged to be committed to the company and, to feel more passionate toward the organization.

The uniqueness of this company is the spiritual promise given between managers and reports. "Managers encourage their staff to study for a higher degree giving a verbal promise of promotion after finishing the study." Managers agree to approve the leave request to study outside working hours (on Saturdays, Sundays or night time).

The job satisfaction variable is depended on individual needs. All of the interviewees feel satisfied with their job. U.S. and Japanese interviewees said they are satisfied with pay (salary, welfare, daily allowance, remuneration) which they consider to be moderate or high. On the other hand, Thai interviewees were less satisfied with their pay which fits the quantitative results. All Thai managers that report to US and Japanese management also were dissatisfied with their pay according to the quantitative results.

Illness

Mr. USA

For Mr. USA mental issues seem more salient than physical issues except for failure to sleep well. I have no physical signs of (bad) stress. In my case, I have become nervous and cannot sleep. I have experienced other mental signs

My company has very good facilities. I usually go to fitness in the same building I work. I spend time about two hours to exercise instead of sit in the car and going crazy the traffic jam. Then I take shower and go home. I think this strategic is very good because I loss weigh. It will reduce medical expense and the employees should perform better.

Miss Japan

Miss Japan stated:

Stress often makes me feel anxious and worried that my boss will punish me if I make mistakes. Mistakes and related consequences and corrective actions usually dominate my thinking.

Stress affects my physical health more than mental health. At the time of stress, I usually suffer from a stomach ache (peptic ulcer) due to excessive acid or a headache.

Mr. Thai

Mr. Thai states:

Usually I work very hard. I have to take care of every production step and I get little sleep. My unusual symptoms are frequent diarrhea from stress from hard working. I always have dreams about work and always feel anxious. Mostly, the stress is a result of failure to finish the products in time.

Thai middle managers who report to Thai senior management appear to suffer more both physically and psychologically from negative work stress than those who report to US senior management. Congruently, the interview data is congruent with the quantitative which found that Thai middle managers reporting to US management were significantly healthier than their respective colleagues.

Stress Management

Miss. USA

Miss USA states “When I feel stress I occasionally go to the shopping mall. I just want to walk and look around at the goods but I do not buy.”

Mr. Japan

Mr. Japan said,

Stress relaxation approaches vary depending on each individual. After seeking stress relaxation, employees feel refreshed and recharged with full energy to work more efficiently. I myself like such adventurous activities as BB (note 7) gun shooting, going to the jungle, camping or military activities. These enable me to exercise and use my brain for my favorite issues. I feel as if I am a fully-charged battery on Monday after I played BB gun shooting on Sunday.

Miss Thai

Normally, if Miss Thai feels much stressed she will stop doing the job immediately, get up from the chair and have a rest somewhere for about 20 minutes. Then she will return to work. But, if she feel stressed outside of office hours, she likes to go to department stores alone, whether to purchase goods or not.

Apparently in the eyes of the Thai middle managers themselves they are able to manage the negative stressors in their lives. Their own statement in this regard and the quantitative data indicates they are quite satisfied in their work reporting to both Thai and international managers (expatriators). Each interviewee has different way to manage stress. It depends on the individual preference. Male would like to go out and excise but female would like to relax such as shopping, listening music, rest at home.

Implementation

From this research it is possible to conclude that positive stress is like a two-edged sword that may benefit or harm the employees. It is, therefore, necessary for management to use it in a proper way and avoid insufficient or excessive stress for optimal work efficiency. Negative stress delivers negative consequences leading to employees' illness and diminution of work efficiency as well as a decrease in job satisfaction level. Consequently, it is important for management to avoid behavior that promotes negative stress in following employees resulting in illness. Similarly, too much positive stress beyond the limitation of employees causes the illness.

Stamper and Johlke (2003) discovered that a good way to lessen stress which leads to illness is to provide open communication within the organization in all levels. Moreover, Wood and Fields (2007) advise that building up a good connection between the leader and the team in jointly setting up strategies enables an organization to lessen stress while increasing job satisfaction. (Chiu and Kosinski, 1995) Anna Suttleworth (2004) suggested that stress management in an organization is essential. Managers need to provide extensive training in stress management both in terms of managing their own negative stress and also to eliminate causing of negative stress and others.

The interviews also suggested that it is in the self interested of companies to provide facilities and time for their employees to exercise and remain fit rather than become ill and probably miss work.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

In US companies, managers experience work flexibility without strict rules but with a focus on individual performance resulting in the less negative stress while Thai managers' stress is at an intermediate level. Under the flexible U.S. management style, it was discovered from the interviews that rules and regulations cause less deeply felt negative stress. They are clearly established, but not strictly observed. A merit system is adopted for performance appraisals and promotions result irrespective of work length or age. Managers experience a high level of positive stress and as a consequence, the organization's focus is placed on employee's competency in order to steer the organization ahead. This can be witnessed by young managers with high salaries. Managers are thus greatly motivated with a desire to succeed in a shorter time. The organizational vision, mission, and strategy are the administrative principles to be complied by all.

In the Japanese management style the administration is centralized and the management team and specialists (Expatriate Managers) are dispatched from Japan headquarters. Japanese people are hard working, devoted, and committed to the organization. So it may be quite difficult to adjust themselves to the culture of Thai middle managers who place a high priority on relationships. The analysis on the sample group revealed that positive stress is a stimulator that enhances job satisfaction in Thai middle manager at a significant level. The managers in Japanese companies put pressure on Thai managers causing a high level of negative effects on employee's health. Moreover, according to Japanese organizational culture, promotion is done by seniority. Juniors are required to pay respect to seniors in all circumstances e.g. In a conversation or a meeting, or when expressing opinions.

Consequently, positive and negative stress under Japanese management may be the cause of considerable illness of their Thai reports.

In respect to the Thai group, Thai senior management tends to use acquaintance or personal relationships in dealing with business and forming business alliances, thanks to their mutual trust and close friendship in which they can share interests. This may explain why Thai managers reporting to Thai

senior management feel healthier than their counterparts who report to Japanese senior management. The interview data suggests that the illness may be done to the same cause namely being the recipients of top management dislike or even wrath.

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Note

Note 1: **Brownie** is slang language which connotes employees being at the bottom of the hierarchy and neither themselves or others in the company expect them to improve.

- Note 2: **Kaizen** is a Japanese philosophy to emphasize continuous improvement. In business, Kaizen leads employees to improve all activities and eliminate waste.
- Note 3: **5S** is a philosophy and a way of organizing and managing the workspace and work flow with the intent to improve efficiency by eliminating waste, improving flow and reducing process unevenness.
- Note 4: '**Bonsai**' is a Japanese pronunciation of the earlier Chinese term *penzai*. The word *bonsai* is used in the West as miniature trees in containers or pots. In this study it is a metaphor for a person who is old and does not need to advance in the organization.
- Note 5: "**Face**" to keep your reputation and the respect of other people. In the organization, employees tend to avoid themselves or others feeling embarrassment.
- Note 6: **Back up** indicates that the employee has a good connection with managers above him in the hierarchy and they protect and support him.
- Note 7: **BB guns** are sport which highly detailed gun simulations for recreational purposes and are expected to be used with proper guidance and safety knowledge. The bullet speeds at 100 to 500 ft/s