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# STRESS AND COPING STYLES OF ENTREPRENEURS: A MALAYSIAN SURVEY

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of the study is to provide empirical evidence on the sources of stress among entrepreneurs in Malaysia and to examine the associated coping mechanisms. An anonymous, self-administered, mail survey was distributed to a sample of 118 entrepreneurs in various business industries. The results show that 'business skills required', 'work pressure', high expectation of others' and 'responsibilities' are among the main elements that generate stress. Various coping strategies were employed to deal with the problem of stress. Results reveal that 'effective communication', 'disregarding', 'diverts thinking' (by doing something else) and 'networking' assist Malaysian entrepreneurs in handling their stress level. The conclusion reached is that, to manage stress, the work assigned must be properly organized; emotions must be kept under control by disregarding unnecessary factors that create stress and spending time with friends are all crucial. The study concludes with recommendations for future studies.*

Keywords: *Entrepreneur, stress, coping mechanism, Malaysia*

## INTRODUCTION

### Entrepreneurs' stress

Commencing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when it was considered a basis for ill health, stress has been a topic for research and academic interest, and numerous studies have examined this phenomenon (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Cooper, Dewe and O'Driscoll, 2001). It is considered to be an internal state or reaction to anything real or imagined that an individual consciously or unconsciously perceives as a threat (Clarke and Watson, 1991). Stress is an inescapable reality of most working environments and has become a popular concept for explaining a wide range of behaviours that appear to defy explanation. Selye (1976) used the term stress to describe physiological changes induced by environmental demands. It is a process in which environmental events or forces threaten the wellbeing of an individual in society. Stress causes a disruption in the emotional stability of an individual that induces a state of disorganization in the personality and behaviour and has proved