

## Self-confidence and Stress Coping Among Hotel Employees Handling Guests' Complaints

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The purpose of this research is to find out the correlation between hotel employees' self-confidence and stress coping when they are handling guests' complaints. The subjects of this research are hotel employees positioned in front-office departments, housekeeping departments, and food and beverage departments of three five-star hotels in Bali. The subjects are selected according to purposive sampling technique. The data is taken from questionnaires and is analyzed by using regression analysis from Statistic Programs SPSS. According to regression analysis data process, a .719 correlation coefficient is obtained with F value of 68.644 ( $p < .000$ ) which indicates significant correlation of independent variables (self-confidence) towards dependent variables (stress coping). The result of this research shows that self-confidence has correlation with employees' stress coping when they are handling guests' complaints.

*Key words:* self confidence, stress coping, hotel, front office, housekeeping, food and beverage department

Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengetahui hubungan kepercayaan diri karyawan hotel terhadap *stress coping* ketika menangani keluhan tamu. Subyek penelitian merupakan karyawan hotel departemen *front office*, *housekeeping*, dan *food and beverage* dari tiga hotel bintang lima di Bali yang diambil menggunakan teknik pengambilan sampel *purposive sampling*. Pengambilan data dilakukan menggunakan kuesioner dan dianalisa menggunakan analisis regresi melalui program statistik SPSS. Berdasarkan pengolahan data diperoleh nilai koefisien korelasi sebesar .719 dengan F regresi sebesar 68.644 pada nilai  $p < .000$ , menunjukkan adanya hubungan yang signifikan dari variabel bebas (kepercayaan diri) dengan variabel terikat (*stress coping*). Hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa kepercayaan diri memiliki hubungan terhadap *stress coping* pada karyawan hotel ketika menangani keluhan tamu.

*Kata kunci:* kepercayaan diri, koping stres, hotel, direksi, kerumahtanggaan, makanan dan minuman

Hospital industry is an industry engaged in services, apart from other service industries such as insurance, banking, transportation, expedition, and many others. The success of service industry relies heavily on providing a high-quality service to their customers; which, consequently, is also the aim of hospital industry. According to Cassee and Reuland (cited in Sulastiyono, 1999), the nature of hotel services are services related to the accommodation of hotel rooms, serving of food and beverages as well as other supporting facilities. Hotel service can be implied as satisfactory and of high-quality depending on the quality of human resources, such as the ability of the employees to provide services with proper attitude, behavior and adequate verbal skills when they interact with guests, as well as other skills or proficiency possessed

by each employee involved in the provided services to the guest (Sulastiyono, 1999).

Hotel employee plays a crucial role in providing services to guests because without adequate human resources, the facilities provided by a hotel become meaningless. Hotel employees are the cruxes to show the hotel level of expertise in providing high-quality service, not to mention hotel complete facilities in an effort to face competition. Therefore, hotel employees must be able to give good and positive impression to their guests by providing excellent services. Employees must be able to serve guests sincerely, skillfully and responsibly along with good personality, behavior, and communication skills in building excellent relationships with guests, which also include handling complaints from guests (Sihite, 2000). According to Lovelock & Wright (2002) complaint is a formal expression of dissatisfaction or displeasure of some aspects received from services provided to them. Handling complaints

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with appropriate tact will greatly affect the guest to re-engage the hotel services and will promote it to others.

The role of hotel employees are needed to handle guests' complaints, especially for employees who directly deal with guests, such as the front office department, housekeeping department, and food and beverage department who provide daily services to the demands and needs of guests, including handling guests' complaints. While presenting complaints, guests can do so either directly to the employee being concerned or by writing in Guest Comment and Suggestion Form. Direct complaints are also varied depending on the guests' different characters and backgrounds. The point is, no matter how the nature of guests' complaints is, hotel employees are required to be able to handle complaints properly and with tact. This is in line with the standard characters of hospital industries which require every hotel employee to show good attitude, friendly manner, and courtship towards every guest who comes to the hotel. However, this is sometimes on the contrary to the state or condition of employees since individuals are sometimes also faced with personal or social problems that push beyond their limit and abilities which effect not only physically but also psychologically.

The requirement to be perfect in front of guests and put aside personal issues faced by individuals certainly would cause an inner conflict on the employees that can cause tension or even stress. This is mainly felt by employees who work at five star hotels where every employee is required to maintain the hotel reputation as a hotel with the highest service standards. If the services do not correspond to the classification of the hotel as a five star hotel, it is possible that the rank as a five star hotel will be abated by the Directorate General of Tourism. The abatement of hotel rank will have impacts on the continuity of the hotel and will also affect the employees; eventually causing great stress among them. According to Carlson, Buskist and Martin (2000), stress is psychological, behavioral, emotional and cognitive responsive pattern to the real stimulus or imagination perceived as a barrier in achieving goals. It might also be perceived as dangers or might interfere with health. One cause of stress occurrence is conflicts within the individual.

Employees' ability to cope or deal with the conditions or situations that can cause stress is called stress coping. Lazarus and Folkman (cited in Schafer, 2000) states that stress coping is cognitive and behavioral changes in individuals which are relatively fixed to manage or to deal with demands both from within and outside which are considered as a burden pressing beyond individuals' limit (Schafer, 2000). One of the factors effecting stress

coping is an individual's confidence. According to Rini (2002), confidence is an individual's positive attitude that enables him to develop a positive assessment, both to himself and to the environment or situation. High self-confidence makes the individual have assurance and positive outlook on an issue, and the ability to focus on problem solving. According to Rini (2002), one of the characteristics of an individual having high self-confidence is having an *internal focus of control*, whereas the individual is always trying to find solutions to the problem and using more *problem-focused coping* when faced with a problem (Hjelle & Ziegler, 1992).

## Stress

Fraser (cited in Doelhadi, 1997) states that the term stress or tension has many connotations. Carlson, Buskist and Martin (2000) declared stress as a psychological, behavioral, emotional, and cognitive responsive pattern to the real stimulus or imagination perceived as a barrier in achieving goals. It might also be perceived as dangerous or might interfere with health. While according to Halonen and Santrock (1999) stress is an individual response to the circumstances or events (stressors) that disturb and demand an individual's ability to overcome them, Santrock (2003) also states that stress is an individual response to the circumstances or events that trigger it which threaten and impair a person's ability to handle it. Maramis (cited in Doelhadi, 1997), on the other hand, argues that stress is any problem or demand of adjustment which if not addressed properly, will harm the balance of human life. Brecht (cited in Sunaryo, 2002) declared stress as an impairment in one's body and mind caused by the changes and demands of life influenced by both surroundings and individuals performance in the surroundings. Selye (cited in Doelhadi, 1997) put it that stress is not just a merely nervous tension and also not a mental disorder that should be avoided by individuals, because stress is always related to the disclosure of all material trends which continue to arise when there is a demand at every body part.

Hardjana (cited in in Doelhadi, 1997) explains that there are at least three elements in the event of stress. The first is stressor as the source of stress that can take form in natural disaster, in life events involving individuals or other people, and environmental problems. Secondly, stressed are the individuals who experience stress which is visible in the form of both psychological responses, such as chaos of thought, emotion, and behavior, and physiology such as nausea, cold sweat, and palpitations. Last is transaction which describes the process of

influencing reciprocal relationship between individuals who experience stress and stressful situations. This reciprocal relationship leads to the effort of constant adjustment between individuals who experience stress and the causes that bring stress in order to achieve balance. The ability and success among different individuals who face the same type of stress will vary, so there will be groups of individuals who suffer severe stress, moderate stress, mild stress, and even groups of individuals who are immune to stress.

According to R. L. Atkinson, R. C. Atkinson, Smith, and Bem (2000) stressful situations experienced by the individuals will cause a response or reaction both psychologically and physiologically: (a) psychological reactions in which stressful situations create emotional reactions ranging from excitement to anxiety, anger and aggression, disappointment, depression, and cognitive disorders; (b) physiological reaction in which stressful situations create physiological reactions. Whatever type of stressors being experienced, the body automatically prepares itself to deal with the stress state by fight or flight response. Metabolism is increasing as the body prepares for the use of energy in physical actions. Heart rate, blood pressure, and respiratory rate increase, and muscles become tense.

## Factors Inflicting Stress

According to Halonen and Santrock (1999) there are several factors which could inflict stress, including a

**Biological factor.** This is mainly body response or reaction when it is faced with stress

**Cognitive factor.** This is an individual's ability in assessing events as something disturbing or challenging. Lazarus said that cognitive appraisal is the individual's interpretation of the events in his life as something harmful, disturbing or challenging, which determine the resources to cope effectively with these events. According to Lazarus, there are two stages in assessing an event: firstly a primary appraisal where an individual interpret an event as damage or harm, a threat or a challenge, and secondly a secondary appraisal where an individual evaluates resources and finds the most effective way to cope with a harmful event.

**Personality factor.** This is an individual's characteristics in stressful situations. There are two characteristics of individuals' personality when they are facing stress. First is the type of personality vulnerable to stress or the so-called type-A behavior pattern, secondly is the personality type always trying to cope with stress or what so-called hardiness.

**Environmental factor.** This include environmental conditions or situations that can cause stress on the individual, such as wars, car accidents, fire, death of beloved ones, and excessive work which can lead to frustration and unhappy relationships. Other situations that can also cause stress are: series of rapid appearing stimuli and unable to cope it, burnout, conflicts such as approach/approach conflict, avoidance/avoidance conflict, and approach/avoidance conflict, and frustration.

**Sociocultural factor.** Social and cultural environments can also cause stress on the individual, namely

**Acculturation.** A culture change happens continuously and closely related to two specific cultures.

**Socio-economic status.** An individual's socio-economic status can cause stress on him and poverty can cause stress on the individual himself and his family.

**Difference in gender roles.** Research shows that women who stay at home, women who feel her life unhappy and full of suspense, and women who are vulnerable and have less physical activities are at bigger risk in experiencing health problems. A research conducted by Lacroix and Haynes (1987) (cited in Halonen and Santrock, 1999) shows that working women are healthier than stay-at-home women.

## Work Stress

Rini (2002) states that when an individual is faced with work demands beyond his capacity, it is more likely that the individual experiences job stress. Luthans (1998) declared stress as a response of adaptation to external circumstances that affect individual's physical, psychological and diverse behavior as long as he is still a member of an organization or a company.

According to Phillip (cited in Rini, 2002) an individual can be considered having the first experience of working stress when firstly, the stress experienced involves the organization or company where the individual works. However, the cause is not only limited within the company, but also including household problems that are carried onto the job and vice versa. Secondly, the indication of an individual's first experience of having working stress can be perceived when the problems experienced inflict negative influence for the company and the individual himself.

Beehr and Newman (cited in Luthans, 1998) defined working stress of an individual as a condition arising from the interaction of the individual with his work and it is characterized as someone who deviates from his normal functions. Robbins (2001) argues that stress is a dynamic condition where individuals are faced with opportunities, limitations, and demands according to their hopes and goals during crucial and uncertain conditions.

## Factors that Cause Working Stress

Cooper (cited in Rini, 2002) states that the following factors can cause a person to experience job stress:

### Conditions of employment.

(a) *Poor working environment.* Poor working conditions have the potential to cause employees' easily falling sick, easily stress, difficult to concentrate, and decreased work productivity. The examples of poor working conditions are uncomfortable working space, extra heat, inadequate air circulation, overcrowded working space, dirty working environment and too much noise

(b) *Overload vs. under-load.* Overload can be distinguished both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative overload happens when the number of works exceeds beyond the targeted employee's capacity causing him to tire easily and put him in a state of "highly-struck". Qualitative overloads happen when the work is very complex and difficult so it highly demands the technical and cognitive abilities of the targeted employee. On the other hand, under-load occurs when employees who possess high competence doing easy tasks so it stimulates the occurrence of stress

(c) *Deprivational stress.* Everly and Girdano (cited in Rini, 2002), experts from the United States introduced the term derivational stress to describe the working conditions that are no longer challenging or no longer attractive to the employees. The complaints that usually arise are boredom, dissatisfaction, or lack social work elements (lack of social communication)

(d) *High-risk or harmful jobs.* Firefighting, military service, and offshore workshop have the potential to cause stress because every time confronted with the possibility of accidents.

**Role conflict.** A research of working stress finds that most employees who work in a very large company or a less structured company experience stress due to role conflict. Employees become stressed because of the obscure role or because of bearing more than one role that oppose to each other says Rice (cited in Rini, 2002).

**Obscure career development system.** No opportunity to promotion often causes a source of stress upon the employees.

**Organizational structure.** Too rigid or even obscure rules, unhealthy political climate within the company, and supervisor's lack of involvement make employees stressed because they feel like parentless kittens and everything become vague.

## Coping

Lazarus and Folkman (cited in Schafer, 2000) defined coping as cognitive and behavioral changes in

individuals which are relatively fixed to manage or to deal with demands both from within and outside which are considered as a burden pressing beyond individuals' limit. Sinta (cited in Simon, Prihanto & Lasmono, 1998) states that according to several experts, coping is a behavioral or mental response to stressful situations which consciously employ an individual's inner resources and environmental resources, and it aims to increase an individual's development, one of which is developing individual personal control.

Feldman (1999) mentions that coping are efforts to control, reduce, or understand threats in order to survive. Kagan and Segal (1992) states that coping is an effort made either constructive or destructive in nature to free an individual from anxiety or stress. In line with Kagan and Segal, Carlson, Buskist and Martin (2000) also state that coping is an action human beings do as anticipation effort to face causes of stress or direct response for the happening stress.

## Stages of Stress Coping

Lazarus and Folkman (cited in Schafer, 2000) mention that there are three stages of stress coping faced by individuals undergoing stressful situations. On the first stage, individuals use their knowledge to identify the situation/problems that are going on. If the situation is considered trivial, then the coping process will end. However, if the situation is considered dangerous and threatening, then the coping process will continue. On the second stage, individuals use their resources to evaluate and analyze the current problems. According to Holroyd and Lazarus (1982), the evaluation process is influenced by previous experiences of the same situations, self-beliefs and environments, and individuals' resources and environments. On the last stage, individuals consequently take proper response to resolve the problems. This response, moreover, involve cognitive and behavioral self-adjustment.

## Factors Affecting Coping

According to Pramadi and Lasmono (2003) there are several factors influencing individual's coping type selection which are:

**Gender.** Based on a research by Lazarus and Folkman (cited in Pramadi and Lasmono, 2003), both men and women are found to equally use both forms of coping, problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. However, Billings and Moos (cited in Pramadi and Lasmono) argue that women tend to be oriented more on emotion, while men are more oriented to task in

overcoming the problem. So women are predicted to be more likely to use emotion-focused coping.

**Level of education.** Menaghan, quoting McCrae (cited in Pramadi and Lasmono, 2003), states that the higher individuals' education level, the higher is their cognitive complexity. So, individuals with higher education will be more realistic and more active in their solving problems and vice versa.

**Development of age.** Age development will distinguish an individual's response to the problems and will also distinguish him in selecting type of coping.

**Environmental context and individual sources.** According to Lazarus and Folkman (cited in Pramadi and Lasmono, 2003), an individual's resources such as experience, perception, intelligence, health, personality, education, situation at hand, and environmental conditions (security) highly determine his process of receiving a stimulus which, then, will be perceived as a pressure or a threat.

**Socio-economic status.** According to Westbrook, citing the opinion of Billings & Moos (cited in Pramadi and Lasmono, 2003), an individual with low economic status will display a less active coping and less realistic. Instead, his coping is more fatal or, even, he will display rejecting response compared to another individual who is of higher economic status.

## Forms of Coping

Santrock (2003) explains that coping strategies are classified into the approaching strategy and avoidance strategy. Approaching strategy includes cognitive effort to understand the cause of stress and active effort to deal with the cause of stress by directly facing both the cause and consequences. Avoidance strategy includes cognitive effort to deny or minimize the cause of stress. It shows in an individual's behavior; to withdraw oneself or avoid the cause of stress. Lazarus (cited in Efendi & Tjahjono, 1999) distinguished coping into two categories:

**Coping focusing on the problem (problem-focused coping).** This is an evident attempt to address the problems, pressures, challenges by altering his difficult relationships with environment. Ratna said that problem-focused coping is used when individuals see a chance to be able to modify or change the stressor. Problem-focused coping can take form in (a) Preparing against harm - by choosing and studying alternatives that can be used to solve the problem, (b) Aggression or attack - by overcoming the difficulties faced with attacks, (c) Avoidance - by thinking or doing something to escape from thoughts or memories of the difficulties being faced, (d) Apathy or Inaction - by letting go or giving up.

**Coping focusing on emotion (emotion-focused coping).** This is an attempt to seek and obtain comfort, and minimize pressure. Ratna said that emotion-focused coping is used when the individual has judgment that nothing can be done to change the stressful situation other than accepting it. Emotion-focused coping can take form of defensive mechanism, namely identification, repression, denial, projection, reaction formation, displacement and rationalization.

Lazarus and Folkman (cited in Ratna, 2000) developed a coping scale, called the Ways of Coping Questionnaire by combining problem-focused and emotion focused coping. Based on this scale, Folkman (1986), establishes eight coping sub-scale consisting of:

1. Confront coping (coping phase 1) is an aggressive attempt to change the situation by giving impression of hostility level and boldness to take risks.
2. Distancing (coping phase 2) is cognitive effort to detach oneself from problems and to significantly minimize the situation.
3. Self-control (coping phase 3) is an attempt to stay tough, to show no feeling, and to control feelings and actions.
4. Seeking social support (coping phase 4) is an attempt to seek others' real, emotional and informal support.
5. Accepting responsibility (coping phase 5) is an individual's recognition as the cause of problem and his attempt to learn and make amend.
6. Escape-avoidance (coping phase 6) is associated with an individual's imaginary dreams and his effort to escape or avoid problem.
7. Planned problem solving (coping phase 7) is associated with deliberate attempts to solve the problem to change the situation.
8. Positive reappraisal (coping scale 8) is an attempt to create positive value by focusing on personal growth which has religious characteristic.

Out of the eight sub-phases on coping, coping phase 1 (confront coping), coping phase 4 (seeking social support), and coping phase 7 (planned problem solving) are part of the problem-focused coping, where coping phase 2 (distancing), coping phase 3 (self-control), coping phase 5 (accepting responsibility), coping phase 6 (escape-avoidance), and coping phase 8 (positive reappraisal) are part of the emotion-focused coping.

## Confidence

Rini (2002) states that confidence is an individual's positive attitude that enables him to develop a positive assessment, both to himself and to the environment or situation. Tedeschi, Lindskold and Rosenfeld (1985)

relate confidence with an individual's reputation characteristics which can increase his efforts in providing influence, such as persuasion and promise. Baron (1998) argues that confidence is an individual's belief about himself, while according Santrock (2003), self-confidence is an individual's comprehensive dimensional evaluation. In addition, an individual's believe about himself is also known as self-esteem or self-image.

### Characteristics of Self-Confidence

Rini (2002) mentions some characteristics or individuals' traits that have proportional confidence. The following is characteristics or individuals' trait that have proportional confidence: (1) Having belief in their own competence and ability, so they do not need praise, recognition, acceptance, or even respect from other people; (2) Having no need to show conformist attitude so they can be accepted by other people or group; (3) Daring to accept and face the rejection of others - daring to be themselves; (4) Having good self-control; (5) Having good internal locus of control such as looking at success or failure depending on their own efforts, not easy to give in to fate or circumstances, and not depending or expecting help from others; (6) Having a positive outlook about themselves, other people and the situations around them (7) Having realistic expectations of themselves although not always being fulfilled.

Some characteristics or individuals' traits that have lack of confidence include the followings: (1) Trying to show conformist attitude mainly to gain recognition and acceptance of groups; (2) Having concern or fear of rejection; (3) Having difficulty to accept one's self-reality (lack of self-accepting) and looking down one's own capability, but on the other hand, putting unrealistic expectations of oneself; (4) Pessimistic – easy to assessing everything negatively; (5) Having fear of failure, thus avoiding any risk and not daring to set targets to succeed; (6) Having tendencies to reject sincere praise (due to self-undervalue); (7) Always placing or positioning oneself as the last-ditch due to his own view of being incompetent; (8) Having external locus of control such as easy to give into fate, and depending on the circumstances, and depending on recognition or acceptance and help from other people.

Based on the characteristics or traits of confidence above, it can be concluded that self-confidence involves a belief of self-competence, having internal locus of control and optimistic attitude. Competency includes correlated skills and knowledge between an individual and what he does (Cascio, 2003). High competencies

will be reflected in individuals' high-confidence when they carry out work. Internal locus of control refers to the perceptions of individuals who consider that their success or failure depend on themselves. In other words, individuals do not necessarily need other people's help and do not easily give up when they are doing their works (Hjelle & Ziegler, 1992). Optimistic is an individual's attitude of viewing or hoping for the best in facing everything that happen in his life (Sugono, 2008).

### Complaint

Lovelock & Wright (2002) state that complaint is a formal expression or expression of dissatisfaction or dislikes toward some aspects received from services provided. Complaint by Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2001) is described as an expression that displays disappointment, dissatisfaction, or lack of happiness towards something or someone. Hornby, Gatenby, and Wakefield (1958) mention that complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction; a result of dissatisfaction; a disease or illness; a formal claim.

**Factors affecting complaint.** When guests or customers complain, there are several factors that influence it which include the following: (a) Economic losses from errors in service. For substitution, guests or customers usually ask for compensation in the form of refund or request the doers to make amends; (b) Having been treated inappropriately, impolitely, and rudely (i.e.: deliberately intimidating, behaving indifferent) by company or employees involved often makes guests or customers complaint because they feel abused, threatened and unappreciated, thus, leading them to feel offended. Complaints submitted are their efforts to work-up and rebuild their self-esteem.

**Types of complaints.** Sugiarto (1999: 199-203) describes several common types of complaints made by guests in the following:

**1. Mechanical complaint.** Complaints relating to equipment malfunction, such as air condition that does not function properly.

**2. Attitudinal complaint.** Complaints that rise because of the negative attitude displayed by the officers at service when they deal with guests. Examples for attitudinal complain are: showing indifference towards guest, giving sullen or sulking face, behaving or talking in curt manner, regarding guests as inferiors, assigning serving tasks to other employees.

**3. Service related complaint.** Complaints related to services provided. Circumstance that causes Service Related Complaint is when guests check-in at a hotel, the room booked is not ready yet so the guests are asked to wait.

#### 4. *Mischievous complaint (unusual complaint).*

Complaints that happen because of guests' psychological self-encouragement, such as loneliness or unhappiness felt by guests who make them want a warm relationship between human beings. Example of this type of complaint is when guests initiate conversation with a hotel employee. This type of complaints does not require solutions; instead, it should be handled with attentive listening.

### Presenting complaints

Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) mention several actions done by guests or customers when they are upset with the service provided, namely (a) Doing nothing with intention of giving opportunities for the company to fix errors made during service; (b) If the company does nothing to fix the errors, then guests or customers will submit complaint to the employer. There are two ways to present complaints directed at the company which are: Submitting complaints directly which could be done by phone to a particular section (e.g. at customer service) or directly to the employee or to the manager concerned or submitting complaints indirectly, which could be done by writing complaints. Hotel guests can write down their complaints on a Guest Comment and Suggestion Form; (c) Sometimes, a number of guests or consumers choose to submit complaints to a third party, such as governments and professional associations.

**How to handle complaints.** Basically, hotel has created exact procedures in handling guests' complaints. Sugiarto (1999) states in general on how to tackle guests' complaints:

- a. Listening to guests' complaints attentively and emphatically in order not to irritate guests even more because they might think that their complaints are not attended properly.
- b. Isolating or inviting indignant guests to another place so the other guests do not know the problem, and also to soothe the indignant guest.
- c. Behaving composedly and not easily being provoked by indignant guests in order not to state that the blame lies within the guests and to avoid debate with guests since it can make guests more irritated.
- d. Handling indignant guests carefully because they are easily offended; using name courteously when addressing them so as to respect their dignity.
- e. Apologizing and giving full attention to guests' problems and its handling procedures.
- f. Making notes about guest complaints is a must since it can soothe them.
- g. Informing remedial action undertaken in accordance with the employees' ability and authority.
- h. Informing guests the period or time needed to handle their complaints and trying to fulfill it.
- i. Observing and paying attention to other employees' assistance as future reference of handling complaints.
- j. Finding out guests' response to the treatment done and thanking guests.

### Correlation between Self-Confidence and Hotel Employees' Stress Coping When Handling Guests' Complaints

The explanation of the background problems shows that good service is needed in the hospital industry. Because of hotel good high quality service, hotel industries are able to survive. However, no matter how good the service is provided, it will stimulate different satisfaction responses from each guest. Guests who are dissatisfied will submit complaints to the hotel or the employee concerned, either directly or indirectly. Provided with guests' different background, when they submit complaints in person, there are times when guests will complaint in anger or in rude manner. No matter how varied the type of guest complaints are, hotel employees are required to handle complaints with tact because handling complaints is also part of hotel service and has become a hallmark of the hospital industry service. All hotel employees must show good attitude, friendliness, and courteous manner to every guest who comes to the hotel - not only when they are providing services, but also when they are handling guest complaints.

The requirement to be perfect in front of guests when providing service sometimes clashes with the condition or state of the employees because individuals sometimes also face personal problems that may affect the individuals both physically and psychologically. The requirement to be perfect in front of the guests and maintaining the quality service as a five star hotel, not to mention the personal problems faced by employees, will absolutely cause conflicts on the individuals, producing tension and causing stress on the employee himself.

Individuals' ability to face stressful situations depends on stress coping that is possessed by each individual. The type of stress coping used in an attempt to overcome stressful situations is influenced by the individual's self-confidence to cope with the situation. High-confidence enables individual having self-belief and creating positive outlook on an issue, and focusing on problem-solving. According to Rini (2002: 2), one of the characteristics or traits of individuals with high self-confidence is having an internal locus of control, and individuals who have an internal locus of control is an

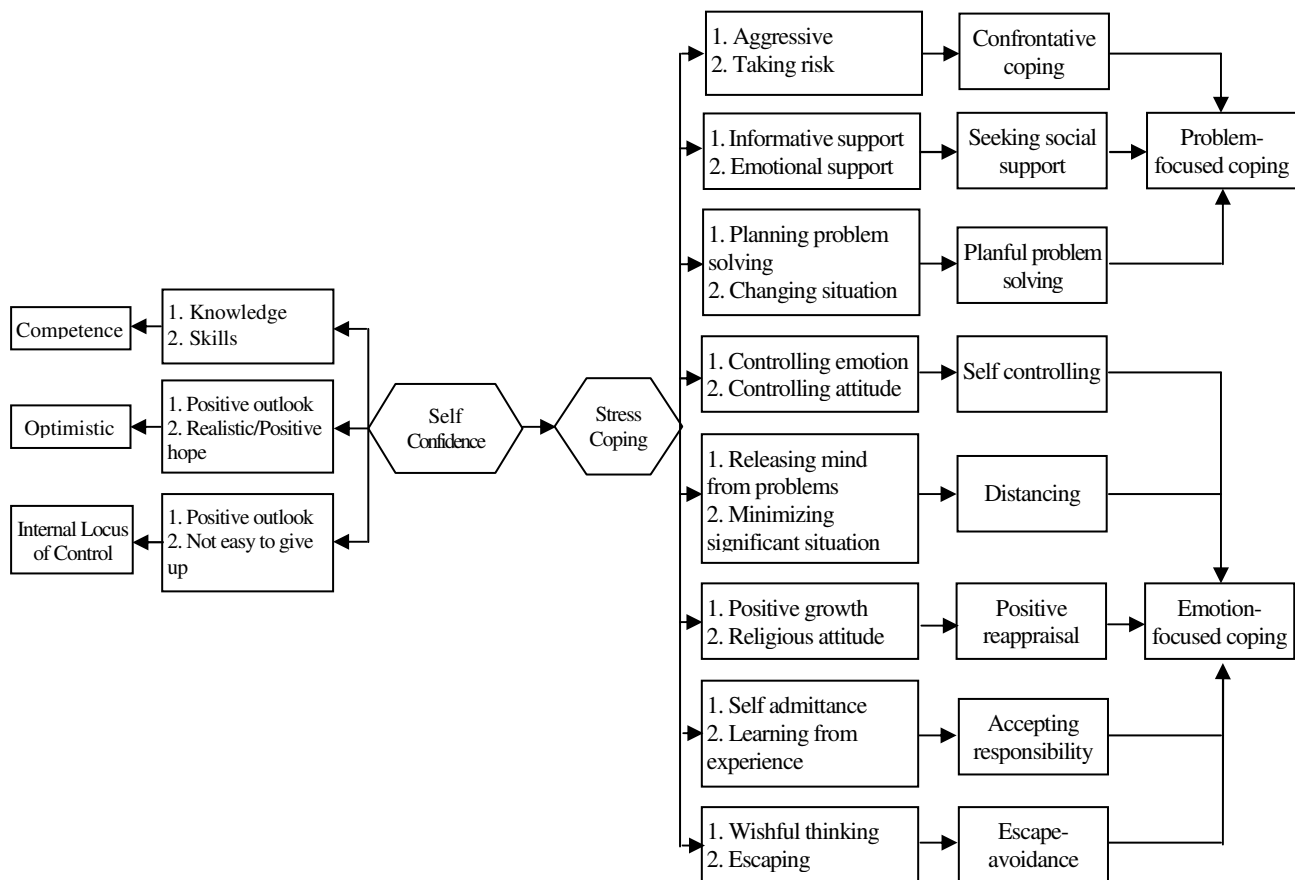


Figure 1. The correlation between self-confidence and stress coping

individual with high self confidence and always try to find solutions to his problems, or more to use problem-focused coping when faced with a problem (Hjelle & Ziegler, 1992).

Related to the objective of this study which aims to determine whether there is a correlation between confidence and stress coping of the hotel employees when they are handling guest complaints, it is expected that this research can provide input on hotels of the role of self-confidence in stress coping used by employees in handling guest complaints. Hopefully, hotel employers will conduct competency development programs related to the topic of this research to improve the quality of hotel services. Accordingly the hypothesis was: There is a significant correlation between self-confidence and stress coping of hotel employees when handling guests' complaints.

## Method

### Research Subjects and Sampling Techniques

The subjects of this research are hotel employees dealing with guests directly when they are providing services who are posted at the front office department,

housekeeping department, and food and beverage department of three five-star hotels in Bali; PJ, KP, and AB. PJ is a five-star resort hotel & villas which consists of 228 rooms and a national network hotel. KP is a local hotel with five-star standards consisting of 243 rooms. Last but not least, AB is a five-star resort hotel with an international network and has a total of 187 rooms.

The selection of five-star hotels is based on the consideration that the five-star hotel is a hotel with the highest rank or classification which means that the hotel is the best hotel in all aspects; in facilities as well as services provided. Therefore, the possibility of employees experiencing stress is high since it is caused by the regulation that requires all employees to provide the best service considering the hotel status as the highest rank hotel.

The data were collected through a purposive total population sampling. The questionnaires were distributed to all employees of the front office, housekeeping, and food and beverage departments that deal with guests directly. It was based on specific characteristics that distinguish subjects (the front office department, housekeeping department, and food and beverage



**Table 1**  
*The Characteristic of Research Subjects*

Hotel Subject Data		PJ	KP Total	AB	Total
Gender	Male	11	17	13	41
	Female	8	10	7	25
	<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>66</b>
Age (years old)	< 25	8	3	0	11
	25-30	10	9	8	27
	30-35	0	11	9	20
	35-40	1	3	2	6
	40-45	0	1	1	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>66</b>
Working Experience (year)	< 1	8	7	0	15
	1-3	5	6	3	14
	3-5	6	5	5	16
	5-7	0	2	2	4
	> 7	0	7	10	17
	<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>66</b>
Latest Education	Junior High	0	1	0	1
	Senior High	2	6	6	14
	Diploma	16	16	13	45
	Bachelor	1	4	1	6
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>66</b>

department) who in their daily jobs always deal with guests directly. The sampling results are reflected on Table 1.

## Data Collection and Measurement

The data was collected using questionnaires basically arranged on aspects of self-confidence and stress coping and is processed statistically. The questions in the questionnaire are prepared based on the summed rating method (method of summated ratings) which is a statement scaling method that uses distribution response as the basis for determining the value of responsive scale. The scales are comprised of 46 items consisting of favorable items and non-favorable, with six response options: (a) 1 for strongly disagree, (b) 2 for disagree, (c) 3 for rather disagree, (d) 4 for rather agree, (e) 5 for agree, (f) 6 for strongly agree

High-scoring on the confidence scale shows high-confidence possessed by the subjects, and vice versa. A high-scoring on the stress coping scale indicates the subject's ability to cope with stress effectively and vice versa. Table 2 is the blueprint of the questionnaires used in this study.

## Validity and Reliability

In this study, the researcher used the content and the construct validity. Content validity is chosen because the

questionnaire items in this study represent the components of the overall object content that will measure (aspect of representation) and reflects the behavior characteristics that will be measured (aspect of relevance). The researcher also uses construct validity because she seeks to discover a trait or theoretical construct that will be measured. In line with construct validity, Magnusson (cited in Azwar, 1999) states that high inter-correlation between items or between units of measurement can be considered as evidence that the instrument measures a particular variable (Azwar, 1999).

Reliability in this study used the internal consistency approach because it can be done in one presentation that enables a condensed implementation. The calculation used is the alpha reliability coefficient with significant level of .05 (Azwar, 1996).

The processing of self-confidence questionnaire shows value validity ranging from .338 to .578 with .717 reliability value. Based on validity and reliability test, three out of 14 items failed, so the total items used are 11 items. In the stress coping questionnaire, data processing shows value validity ranging from .386 to .708 with .859 reliability values. Therefore, 10 out of 32 items failed and only 22 items are valid. Overall, in 46 combined questionnaires of confidence and stress coping, 13 items failed making, the rest 33 items valid and of use. Table 3 is validity and reliability results, and valid items.

## Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis techniques used in this research is regression analysis and inferential statistics which is comparative in nature: the analysis of variance. The technique selection is based on the consideration that regression analysis is able to measure the correlation between independent variables and dependent variables. On the other hand, regression analysis is also needed to identify the contribution of independent variable onto the dependent variable by measuring the effective contribution. Moreover, regression analysis is also used to identify the correlation between independent variable and dependent variable in three departments; the front office department, house-keeping department, and food and beverage department. The data processing techniques use computer Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 12.0.

## Research Implementation

In general, the research implementation was divided into three stages. The first stage was carried out at PJ hotel from 27<sup>th</sup> June 2005 until 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2005. The second

Table 2  
*Questionnaire Blueprint*

Independent Variable	Aspect	Total Item	Sample Item
Self- confidence	Competence	4	My knowledge about my duties enable me in handling complaints
	Optimistic	4	By using my knowledge, I believe I can handle guests' complaints
	Internal locus of control	6	My abilities determine my success in handling guests' complaints
	Total Items	14	
Dependent Variable	Aspect	Total Item	Sample Item
Stress Coping	Confront coping	4	When needed, non-procedural complaints handling can be done
	Seeking social support	4	Superior's and colleague's emotional support enable me to handle guests' complaints
	Planning problem solving	4	Planning different handling methods can be handy for me
	Self controlling	4	I handle guests patiently even though they might offend me
	Distancing	4	Guests' complaints does not affect my mood and my work
	Positive reappraisal	4	I get important experience by taking guests' complaints
	Accepting responsibility	4	If guests' complaints occur because of my error, I admit it and apologize
	Escape-Avoidance	4	When guests complaint, I pretend to be busy and ask my colleague to handle it
	Grand Total	32	

Table 3.  
*Valid Items of the Questionnaire*

Independent Variable	Aspect	Total Item	Grand Total	Total Valid Item	Total Valid Item
Self-confidence	Competence	4		4	
	Optimistic	4	14	3	11
	Internal locus of control	6		4	
Dependent Variable	Aspek	Total Item	Grand Total	Total Valid Item	Total Valid Item
Stress Coping	Confront coping	4		2	
	Seeking social support	4		4	
	Planful problem solving	4		4	
	Self controlling	4	32	2	22
	Distancing	4		3	
	Positive reappraisal	4		2	
	Accepting responsibility	4		4	
	Escape-Avoidance	4		1	

stage was carried out at KP Hotel starting from 5<sup>th</sup> July 2005 until 11<sup>th</sup> July 2005. The third stage was carried out at AB Hotel from 12<sup>th</sup> July, 2005 to 18<sup>th</sup> July, 2005.

Each stage began by submitting application to the authorized person asking for permission to conduct the research in the hotel. After obtaining permission from the authorized person, the researcher distributed the questionnaires and conducted interviews to collect information and data required. For practical purposes, the questionnaires distributions were done by hotel HRD because when the research was conducted, all the three hotels happened to have high room occupancy. However, the researcher managed to do interviews with HRD managers. In the end, the hotels concerned certified that the researcher had conducted a study on the hotels.

## Results

### Data Analysis

Processing data obtained from the collection via genuine questionnaire begins with validity and reliability test with .05 significance level. Valid items have correlation coefficient from .386 to .708. Validity test conducted to all 46 questionnaire items singles out 33 valid items and leaves 13 invalid items unused.

Reliability test is conducted using internal consistency method by calculating coefficient reliability of Cronbach alpha. The calculation show that the coefficient alpha obtained is .859 of .000 error probability showing that the questionnaire is reliable.

Table 4  
*The Regression Analysis*

	Data Analysis
Correlation Coefficient (R)	.719
Determinate Coefficient (R <sup>2</sup> )	.518
F	68.651
Significant value (p)	.000
Regression Equation	$Y = .936 + .803 x$
T Value	8.286

The data analysis used in this research is regression analysis starting with assumption test; normality test and linearity test. The assumption test shows that data distribution is normal and linear. The next process is regression analysis calculation to determine whether there is a significant correlation between independent variable (confidence) and dependent variable (stress coping). Last, the determination of regression line equation is conducted.

From the calculation of regression analysis, it shows a correlation coefficient of .719 with F value of 68.651 and significance value of .000 indicating a significant effect between the independent variable (confidence) and the dependent variable (stress coping) with regression line equation  $Y = .936 + .803 x$ . This equation shows that if an employee's confidence goes up by 1 point, then stress coping increases by .803. In other words, it can be interpreted that the higher employee's confidence is, the higher or better is his stress handling or stress coping.

The calculation of regression analysis from both statistical programs does not diverge significantly (see Table 4).

Regression analysis is then, performed to determine relationship pattern of confidence and stress coping in each hotel department. Based on the calculation of regression analysis on front office department employees, a .575 correlation coefficient with F value of 8.405 and significance value of .010 is obtained. This shows a significant relationship between confidence and stress coping among the front office department employees. The calculation of regression analysis on housekeeping department employees, a correlation coefficient of .691 with F value 21.930 and .000 significance value is found which indicates a significant relationship between confidence and stress coping. Calculation of regression analysis on food & beverage department employees shows .828 correlation coefficient with F value of 41.343 and .000 significance value indicating a significant relationship between confidence and coping with stress.

## Discussion

The result of this research shows that there is a significant correlation between self-confidence possessed by hotel employees and stress coping when they are handling guests' complaints, proving research hypothesis to be accurate. Moreover, a research on each department also shows a significant pattern of correlation between employees' self-confidence and stress coping when dealing with guest complaints. Although the correlation values of self-confidence and stress coping in each department differ to each other, the whole analysis result shows a significant correlation between employees' self-confidence and stress coping when handling guest complaints; be it in the front office department, housekeeping department, and food and beverage department. Therefore, employees' high self-confidence has effects on the effective stress coping when experiencing stress while handling guests' complaints.

In spite of having low correlation value of self-confidence and stress coping (0.575), there is a significant effect of self-confidence in stress coping. This is due to front-office department employees having most frequent or even always having to deal directly with guests more than the housekeeping department who interact with guests only when a problem occurs. The position of front-office employees as the first to welcome make them the first target for guests who come to the hotel either to make reservation or to ask any information. Therefore, the employees of this department have a remarkable opportunity to interact with guests directly. This is also in accordance with front-office employees' duties to receive visitors, handle room reservations, handle bills and payments, give information services, transmit telephone, and manages luggage (Sihite, 2000: 115-133). This situation requires the front office department employee to always be ready and to have high self-confidence and ability to handle problems effectively and offer solution when dealing with guests with different characters.

Among the employees of housekeeping department, the correlation between self-confidence and stress coping is relatively high with correlation value (.691). This indicates that although the housekeeping department employees meet guests less intensively, the tasks undertaken in this department has significant influence on guests' satisfaction as it relates to guests' comfort and safety in the use of hotel facilities, making the employees of housekeeping department vulnerable to guest complaints. Sihite commented (2000: 115-133) that the employees of this department have duties to maintain cleanliness and tidiness of guest rooms or common areas, arrange completeness of materials daily used in the rooms, including hotel facilities materials. Therefore confidence is needed in handling

guests' complaints along with selective stress coping in order to be able to deliver effective complaint handling and effective solutions to maintain guests' satisfaction towards the provided services. Direct interaction between the employees of housekeeping department and guests happen when there are problems with cleanliness, tidiness or completeness of rooms and public facilities, and when there are special requests from guests - guests requesting flowers to be provided in their room every day.

The employees of food and beverage department demonstrate high correlation value between confidence and stress coping (0.828) indicating significant influence of self-confidence in stress coping. This shows that even only some employees deal with guests directly, but the results of tasks undertaken in this department have significant impact on guests' satisfaction as they relate to the food and beverages served. This condition affects the confidence needed to handle guests' complaints and determination of effective stress coping in dealing with complaints effectively and offering solution. According to Sihite (2000), employees of this department have duties to prepare, manage food and drinks in kitchen and serve them. Other food and beverage employees who deal directly or interact intensively with guests are those who serve and accept guests' reservations, serve guests' needs of food and beverage, and handle guests' complaints relating to all services in the restaurant. The rest of food and beverages employees are bar attendants who serve both alcoholic beverages and non-alcoholic beverages, and the room service attendants who serve food and beverage orders to guests' rooms.

## Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that self-confidence and stress coping has a significant correlation. This correlation also shows that the employees' confidence have influence on the selection of effective form of stress coping when they are dealing with guests' complaints. Although each department has different correlation values of confidence and stress coping, generally the three departments (front-office, housekeeping, and food and beverage) shows significant correlation between self-confidence and stress coping, thus showing the influence of confidence on stress coping when dealing with guests' complaints. Conclusively, according to the results of this study, it can be assumed that when employees are faced with guests' complaints, confidence is needed to support the selection of proper stress coping in order to act tactfully and appropriately - satisfying the guests and encouraging them to come back and using the hotel service in near future.

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