

## The Job Demands-Resources Model on Employee Deviance of Emergency Services Personnel: A proposed framework

**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to propose a framework for understanding the antecedents of employee deviance in emergency services personnel. Emergency services are a labour intensive sectors and their employees are entrusted to protect life and property of victims during emergencies. Their decisions during the emergency situation is critical and able to minimize the post-disaster impacts. Emergency services personnel are normatively exposed traumatic experiences and work pressure during emergencies and these may resulted them to demonstrate negative reactions such as employee deviance. This paper discusses possible antecedents that determine an emergency services personnel's deviant behaviors and offers a conceptual framework based on Job Demands-Resources Model and the existing literature to explain employee deviance in emergency services.

**Keywords:** Deviance, Emergency Services, Job Stress, Organizational Support

### Introduction

Emergency services have been a key player in the planning, preparation and coordination of emergency situations. Employees of emergency services are people that trained to make right decision, take action and to help save lives and property (Moran, 1998, 1999; Moran & Britton, 1994; Paton, 2003, 2005). In the Malaysia's emergency services, emergency coordination is placed between the front and back offices. Front office employees in emergency services refer to professional such as police, paramedics, fire fighters and other emergency services personnel. Emergency services personnel are trained people with whom to provide rescue or other emergency services in emergency situations like fire, explosion, building collapse, natural disasters (i.e. floods and landslides) and sudden health effects (i.e. Severe Acute Respiration Syndromes - SAR). Back office employees describes the support staff that manages front office operations. In any event, the front office employees, namely the emergency services personnel will involve and helps emergency situations which they are entrusted to protect life and property of victims, and to minimize post-disaster impacts. The role of emergency services personnel is pivotal in the realization of national emergency services goals.

Every time when a person makes an emergency call to the emergency call centre, emergency call dispatcher will assign the call to emergency services personnel. These people in a team of four to six will need to take it seriously where they are expected to handle each distress situation competently. In general, the bravery and dedications of these emergency services personnel is unaware by the people and its management (Moran, 1999, 1998; Moran & Britton, 1994). For example, after providing first-aid to fatal accident victims, the ambulance will bring the victims to a hospital, everyone will assume that this their duty. Employees of emergency services have an extremely time-consuming and energy draining job because emergencies are incidents that occur suddenly, unexpectedly and life-threatening (Chandrakantan, Ali, & Shamsudin, 2010). Their passion for this job lead them to move beyond the time limits and overcome shortcomings at emergency site. As such, emergency services personnel are vulnerable to severe stress that potentially lead to the development of post-trauma symptoms (Moran, 1999; Moran & Britton, 1994; Paton, 2005) from the exposures they experienced during helping post-disaster victims during evacuation activities. Besides, all emergency services employees may at risk for a variety of personal and health-related concerns. Irrefutably, the front office emergency services personnel at risk because they are routinely exposed to situations, traumatic events and daily pressure that could be endangering their own life to save another person. In certain circumstances, the amount of stress is too much to bear by their own defence system and it has resulted them to manifest behaviours that against organizational norms such as lacking of enthusiasm, withdrawal, turnover and/or other psychological syndromes (Moran & Britton, 1994; Mosadeghrad, 2014; Paton, 2005).

At this point, it is worth to have a second thought if emergency services personnel is ready to carry out their jobs effectively and competently to balance with the amount of expectation and needs of public safety. Expanding from research conducted among emergency services employees (e.g. police, firefighter), literature indicates to the importance to monitor job demands (i.e. job stress)

(Brown & Campbell, 1991; Moran, 1998; Moran & Britton, 1994; Mosadeghrad, 2014) and interpose job resources (i.e. organization support) (Lim, Benjamin, & Teh, 2016; Mitani, Fujita, Nakata, & Shirakawa, 2006; Mosadeghrad, 2014) will stimulate positive post-traumatic growth and recovery among the employees of emergency services. However, little is known about background characteristics of the emergency services personnel which induce post-traumatic growth and recovery. In addition, it is also rare to find study that demonstrates relationships between the variables of job demands and job resources that will deter emergency services employees to engage in employee deviance.

Hence, the findings of this study can assist emergency managers and researchers be aware of the potential for types of reactions and outcomes in emergency work. Moreover, the findings can also assist counsellors, administrators and managers of emergency services who assist emergency services personnel in post-traumatic growth and recovery while at the same time, support and deter them from engaging in employee deviance. Intrinsically, the declination in employee deviance will lead to higher job performance (Metofe, 2017).

It has been widely recognised that resistance to job performance among the employees is one of the mechanism and a contrary indicator of negative work outcomes (Dalal, 2005; Hafidz, Hoesni, & Fatimah, 2012; O'Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, & McDaniel, 2012). According to Brown and Campbell, (1991), routine and frequently occurring of job demands (i.e. excessive workloads, staff shortage, irregular working hours, time constraints) will have adverse consequences such as increases in accident rates, poorer production performance and increased absences among emergency services personnel. In regard to this, Mitani et al., (2006) have accentuated that job resources (i.e. social support) is attributed to personal accomplishment that minimised emotional exhaustion and disassociation (type of deviant behaviour). Mosadeghrad (2014) emphasized that an increase in duty and job demands, hospital employees will result in more interpersonal tensions and conflicts. These results implied that stressors (i.e. dissatisfaction with remuneration, heavy workload, inadequate staff, unfairness and inequality) on employees of emergency services (i.e. police, fire fighters, health professionals, paramedic, emergency services personnel) may have damaging consequences on organization and individual. From an organization's perspective, employees of emergency services jobs are stressful, and emergency services personnel are prone to high degree of stress (Larsson, Berglund, & Ohlsson, 2016; Dahlan, Beddu, Azhar, & Shafinaz, 2016; Fallon & Rice, 2011; Chandrakantan et al., 2010; Miller, 1995, 1999; Moran, 1998, 1999; Moran & Britton, 1994). Overwhelming of job stressors can lead to personal failure and jobs ineffectiveness as a result of high workloads, staff shortage, irregular working hours and uncertainty (Mosadeghrad, 2014; Radzali, Ahmad, & Omar, 2013; Mitani et al., 2006;). Whereas, organization may interpret ineffectiveness job performance of the emergency services personnel as engaging in employee deviance.

In the past three decades, numerous studies were conducted on the predictors of employee deviance (Metofe, 2017; Berry, Ones, & Sackett, 2007; Dalal, 2005). However, most of the scholars are centered on Western countries such as (Aquino, Lewis, & Bradfield, 1999; Bennett, Aquino, Reed, & Thau, 2005; Ménard, Brunet, & Savoie, 2011; Mount, Ilies, & Johnson, 2006; O'Neill, Lewis, & Carswell, 2011). Moreover, employee deviance is costly to both organizations and its members (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). The victims of employee deviance will also suffer from stress-related conditions, decrease productivity and low-morale, as well as the victims are more likely to leave the organization (Metofe, 2017; Berry et al., 2007; Dalal, 2005;). It is necessary to prevent the detrimental costs of employee deviance in the job performance of emergency services personnel, and however empirical research on employee deviance are still scarce (Chiu & Yeh, 2015; Lim et al., 2016; Radzali et al., 2013). A review of the literature indicates that employee that perceived low-level of organizational support and experiencing high level of job stress are some of the prevalent factors that provoke negative outcomes by their employees (Lim et al., 2016; Alias & Rasdi, 2015; Liu & Ding, 2012; Radzali et al., 2013; Salami, 2010). Given that the crucial role of emergency services personnel to respond to life-threatening situations coupled with the rise of climate-related disasters, an understanding of the predictors of employee deviance among the emergency services personnel have become increasingly important. As such, the aim of this paper is to propose a research framework that link between job demands and job resources on employee deviance among emergency services personnel in Malaysia's emergency services. In addition, there are senior, male and female and more

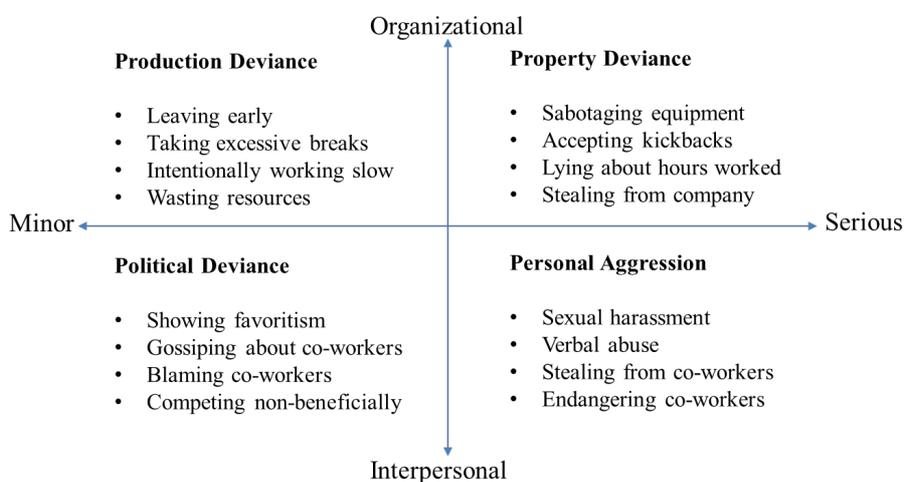
experienced employees that work as emergency services personnel in emergency services, the effect of age, sex and tenure were identified as potential moderators in the proposed research framework.

## Literature Review

Employee deviance: There are many labels of employee deviance. Bennett and Robinson (2000) have defined employee deviance as a voluntary behaviour that violates significant organizational norms and, in doing so, threatens the well-being of an organization, its members or both. Examples of employee deviance behaviours include production deviance, gossiping about co-workers, theft, sabotaging equipment, and personal aggression. They have categorized employee deviance into two dimensions (see Figure 1), namely interpersonal and organizational deviance (Robinson & Bennett, 1995) and the antecedents to each type of employee deviance are different (Berry et al., 2007; Chiu & Yeh, 2015; Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Hence, an investigation of the antecedents of employee deviance are beneficial to organizations, especially in formulating preventive policies and practices that would be able to prevent employee deviance. These preventive policies and practices will be in return reduce organizational costs and enhance organizational effectiveness.

As of now, there are several measures of employee deviance. The most widely used scales is Robinson and Bennett's (1995) Workplace Deviant Behaviour Scale. There are 17 items to measure the two dimensions of employee deviance: 7-item and 12-items to measure interpersonal and organizational deviance respectively. This scale had demonstrated a good internal consistency and test-retest reliability (Alias & Rasdi, 2015; Lim et al., 2016). In addition, Bennett and Robinson (2000) advised that the total score can be used in empirical research since there is moderate correlations between the two dimensions. Besides, the workplace deviant behaviour scale demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties in organizational studies (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Robinson & Bennett, 1995).

Figure 1: Typology of Employee Deviance (Robinson and Bennett, 1995)



The underpinning theory of this study will be the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model. The JD-R model states that there are two types of situational factors that influence how individual behaviour relates to their working environments (Bakker, Demerouti, DeBoer, & Schaufeli, 2003; Bakker, Demerouti, & Verbeke, 2004). Specifically, job demands refer to those physical, psychological, social or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological (cognitive and emotional) effort or skills and are therefore associated with certain psychological and/or psychological costs. Some examples include high work pressure, irregular working hours, and unfavourable physical environment. On the contrary, job resources refer to those physical, psychological, social or organizational aspects of the job that are either/ or (1) functional in achieving work goals, (2) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs, and (3) stimulate personal growth, learning and development. Few examples of job resources are supervisor and co-worker support, participation in decision-making, and career opportunities. Besides, the JD-R

model suggests that people tend to decrease job demands that exhaust employee's energy and eventually result in a health breakdown whereas magnify the motivational potential of job resources to foster the willingness to dedicate one's ability and efforts to the work task. As a result, Norsilan, Omar and Ahmad (2014) have confident that the in-absentia of job demands (i.e. job stress) and in-presence of job resources (i.e. organizational justice, perceived organizational support) circumstances will decreases employee deviance.

### **Antecedents of employee deviance**

A review of the extent literature revealed that the antecedents to employee deviance were empirically examined in several studies (Alias, Rasdi, Ismail, & Samah, 2013; Berry et al., 2007; Dalal, 2005). Generally, these antecedents were categorized as individual (i.e. personality), organizational (i.e. support, trust, justice) and work (i.e. job stress). The results from past studies advanced evidence that these antecedents have influence on both positive and negative work outcomes. In light of this, Norsilan, Omar and Ahmad (2014) suggested that job stress and El Akremi, Vandenberghe and Camerman, 2010) proposed that perceived organizational support was as a proxy to indicate individual's general level of job demands and job resources. Empirically, Mosadeghrad (2014) has tested the link between job stress and physical injuries, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, depression and negative personal behaviours (i.e. anger, anxiety and irritability). In his study, he concluded that respondents with higher job stress scores have higher score in negative personal behaviours and employees' turnover intentions. Next, Lim, Benjamin and Teh (2016) have examined the link between perceived organizational support and employee deviance and found that respondents with low scores of perceived organizational support will have high scores in employee deviance. Lim et al., (2016) explained that because respondents with lower perceived organizational support are not appreciated by their organization, hence they are more prone to violate organizational norms and engage in deviant behaviours.

### **Job Stress**

Over the past three decades, job stress has emerged as a major psychosocial influence on physical and mental health (Mitani et al., 2006). Following Parker and DeCotiis (1983) that defined job stress is a particular individual's awareness or feeling of personal dysfunction as a result of perceived conditions or happenings in the work setting. While Cooke and Rousseau (1984) have defined job stress as an emotional experience that connected with strain, anxiety and tension that originated from a job. In this study, job stress refer to the emergency services personnel's awareness, feeling or emotional experience of personal dysfunction that connected with strain, anxiety and tension which originated from the emergency services personnel's occupation in the emergency services.

Emergency services are labour intensive industry. In the context of emergency services such as police, fire fighter, paramedic and other emergency services personnel, job stress are also common problems in health-service workers. This is because emergency services personnel in the emergency services have very high frequency of interactions with the co-workers and the people in public places. First, the emergency services personnel need to attend to emergency callers' request and give first hand help to the victims in the present of other people. Secondly, they have to take instructions from their supervisor and emergency call dispatcher to execute their job. Finally, emergency services personnel need to coordinate closely with employees from different emergency departments in delivering service to customers. This suggests that, in executing their job, emergency services personnel need to work in uncertain emergency circumstances and eventually these situations may cause panic attack at work. Mosadeghrad (2014) asserted that health-service is a stressful profession. In this regard, past studies have provide empirical support on the relationship between job stress and various work behaviours, namely, organizational citizenship behaviour and employee deviance (Alias & Rasdi, 2015; Berry et al., 2007; Dalal, 2005). In addition, job stress were negatively associated with job satisfaction, well-being and organizational citizenship behaviour (Alias & Rasdi, 2015; Berry et al., 2007; Dalal, 2005). In that event, emergency services personnel who have heavy workload, inadequate training, inadequate salary, lack of career prospects, problems with colleagues and long working hours can also be stressful. On the grounds of JD-R model, job demands that an individual

experienced would have inverse impact on employee performance. Firstly, when an individual experience consistent failure to meet the specific standards and level of performance, they will come into contact of negative emotions such as frustration and irritation whereas less likely to invest more effort in their work and finally, they are more likely to exhibit workplace deviant behaviour. Therefore, it is expected that job stress will directly and positively influence the employee deviance of emergency services personnel, and first proposition of this study is presented as below.

**Proposition 1: Job stress of emergency services personnel emergency services personnel will be positively related to employee deviance**

### **Perceived Organizational Support**

Perceived organizational support refers to an employees' perception that their organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Besides, Chiang & Hsieh (2012) gestated perceived organizational support as the general cognition of employees about how their organization concerned about their well-being and how their contributions are appreciated. As a result, high levels of employees' perceived organizational support is able to create feeling of obligation to the organization as well as make them feel they have to return the employer's commitment by engaging in positive behaviours (Ebtsam, 2015). Likewise, perceived organizational support is conceptualized as emergency services personnel perception about how their organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being.

In the context of emergency services, emergency services personnel perception of perceived organizational support is reflective. This is because emergency services personnel in the emergency services often interacts with people in emergency situations. Foremost, the emergency services personnel need to attend to emergency calls once the call is dispatched to them. Next, emergency services personnel have to evaluate the risks, resources and responds to the emergency situations to ensure that lives and/or property of the victims are safe. Lastly, emergency services personnel need to report accurately and provide factual information relating to the emergency situations. This implies that, in executing their job, emergency services personnel need physical, mental and emotion to be strong and stable to make better decisions and executing their job. Drawing upon JD-R model, job resources refer to those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that are functional in achieving organizational goals, reduce job demands and stimulate personal growth and development. In the similar vein, high level of perceived organizational support is the positive perception of employees that their organization pays attention to their contributions. As such, a high levels of perceived organization is necessary for the emergency services personnel to meet the demand for competence in carry out the duties and responsibilities. In additions, high levels of perceived organizational support will helps emergency services personnel to feel that they are cared for and recognised by the organization. Accordingly, such a relationship can allow people to connect psychologically with the organization and help them to adapt to the working environment successfully.

As mentioned above, a stronger sense of cares for and appreciated by the organization, emergency services personnel reciprocate employer's commitment by increasing their efforts in their work. Therefore, it is expected that perceived organizational support will directly and negatively induce employee deviance of emergency services personnel. Hence, proposition 2 is presented as follows:

**Proposition 2: Perceived organizational support by the emergency services personnel will be negatively related to employee deviance.**

### **Moderating role of age, sex and tenure**

This study also examine three demographic characteristics that were found to influence employee deviance. These variables are age, sex and tenure in the current job. Age may moderate the relationship between job stress, perceived organizational support and employee deviance because empirical evidence indicates that older employees tend to be more honest than younger employees (Andreoli & Lefkowitz, 2009; Berry et al., 2007).

Besides, males tend to engage in more aggressive behaviour at work, absenteeism, and violent (Berry et al., 2007; Hemdi & Aizzat, 2006). Tenure in the current job serves here as a proxy of working characteristics, which is another component of JD-R model. People who work for a longer period in their current job, are likely to develop skills that are relevant and specific to the domain, thereby, tackling problems (i.e. heavy workload, variations in emergency cases, inadequate training) in a more focused and relevant mode (Hemdi & Aizzat, 2006; Lim et al., 2016). As such, longer tenure were less likely to commit employee deviance. It is expected that the relationship between job stress, perceived organizational support and employee deviance will be moderated as follows:

*Proposition 3a: The relationship between job stress and perceived organizational support on employee deviance are stronger for younger emergency services personnel than older emergency services personnel in the emergency services.*

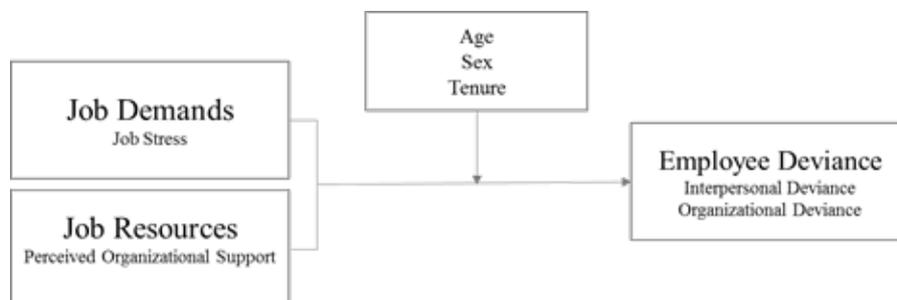
*Proposition 3b: The relationship between job stress and perceived organizational support on employee deviance are stronger for male emergency services personnel than female emergency services personnel in the emergency services.*

*Proposition 3c: The relationship between job stress and perceived organizational support on employee deviance are stronger for longer in tenure emergency services personnel than shorter in tenure emergency services personnel in the emergency services.*

## Research Framework

Based on the above arguments and in relation to JD-R model, a research framework is constructed, as depicted in Figure 2. Job stress and perceived organizational support are assumed to predict employee deviance while age, sex, and tenure will moderate the relationship between job stress and perceived organizational support on employee deviance.

Figure 2: Research Framework



## Conclusion

The detrimental costs of employee deviance is pervasive and exorbitant. One feasible way for emergency services to remain significant is to ensure that employer maintain a strong relationship with their employees so employees will work together to create a conducive working environments. Since emergency services is a labor intensive service sector, emergency services personnel play a critical role in ensuring all emergency situations are well coordinated. A review of past literature has supported the significant relationship between job stress, perceived organizational support and employee deviance. Therefore, a research framework has been proposed where job stress and perceived organizational support have been postulated as predictors of employee deviance. In addition, given the fact that demographic characteristics, namely age, sex and tenure in current position are differ in terms of their personal and work values, age, sex and tenure in current position have been posited to have a moderating effect on the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

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