# THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF SOCIAL SUPPORT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOB DEMAND AND WORK STRESS AMONG EMPLOYEES IN A SHARED SERVICES COMPANY

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## 1.0. BACKGROUND

The conception of stress was announced to physiology in the 1936 by Hans Selye, who defined it as a non-specific response of the organism to any pressure or demand (Tonhajzerova & Mestanik, 2017). Stress has in general have been viewed as a set of neurological and physiological feedbacks that serves an adaptive function (Ashare, Lerman, Cao, Falcone, Bernardo, Ruparel and Loughead, 2016). Traditionally, stress research has been oriented toward studies involving the body's reaction to stress and the cognitive processes that influence the perception of stress (Wahbeh, 2014).

Though, social perspectives of the stress response have noted that different people experiencing similar life conditions are not necessarily affected in the same manner (Bowling, 2014). Lindholm (2013) defined stress as "a particular relationship between a person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or beyond his or her resource and endangering his or her well-being". In the advanced study, the concept was then comprised by psychology and other social sciences, as well as by social policy-makers, and ultimately made its way to everyday vocabulary (Milczarek, Schneider & González, 2009).

Research into the societal and cultural influences of stress raise the necessary to re-examine how stress is defined and studied. By applying this notion to a working situation, he European Agency for Safety and Health at Work has define work-related stress is experienced when the demands of the work environment exceed the workers' ability to cope with (or control) them (Milczarek, Schneider, & González, 2009). Stress is a vigorous condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint, or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain 2 and important (Beheshtifar, Hoseinifar and Moghadam, 2011).

It is important to understand that stress could affect the performance, mental and physical health of the individual at work. The reasons behind and manifestations of work stress must be identified.

Therefore, this research would carry with objectives as follows:

1. To study the contribution of job demand on work stress of employees from Shared Services and Outsourcing (SSO) company.
2. To study the influence of social support on work stress of employees from SSO company.
3. To determine if social support mediate the relationship between job demand on work stress of employees from SSO Company.

## 2.0. Literature Review

Job demands are often been viewed as stressor that result to certain physiological and psychological costs (Bakker et al., 2004). Evidences from prior studies demonstrated

job demands were related to lower individual well-being and unfavourable work outcomes, particularly burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007), health complaints (Demerouti et al., 2001; Hakanen et al., 2008b) and turnover intention (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) among the employees. Similarly, Lewig et al. (2007) found that high job demands led to burnout, which adversely affected the Australian volunteer ambulance officers' health (e.g. depression, strain and happiness). The results showed that non-paid or volunteer workers experienced similar deteriorating well-being as paid workers when they were confronting with demanding work situations. In addition, job demands were found to affect the determination to continue as volunteer through burnout indirectly (Lewig et al., 2007).

There were several studies examining the direct effects of job demands on work engagement, but the results were relatively inconsistent and unclear (Sawang, 2012). Some studies revealed that job demands are the major cause of burnout, but job demands do not have any significant influence on work engagement (Bakker et al., 2008; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Taipale et al. (2011) found that job demands reduce work engagement in the samples of employees from Finland, Sweden, Germany and Hungary, but the relationships were quite weak. On the other hand, no significant relationship was found between these two variables in the samples from the Netherland, Portugal, Bulgaria and the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, Mauno et al. (2007) and Schaufeli et al. (2008a) discovered that the relationship between time pressure demands and work engagement were positive and significant. This suggests that job demands can operate as a motivator as long as it is not excessive. Crawford et al. (2010) explained that the relationship between job demands and work engagement depend on the nature of job demands (hindrance demands vs. challenge demands). Challenges demands (e.g. time pressure and high job responsibilities) were found to be positively associated with work engagement. This scenario is influenced by the general believes among the employees that challenging job demands is good for self-enhancement as they are given chances to learn more things that are related to their jobs. In contrast, negative associations were found between hindrance demands (e.g. politics in organisation, role stressors, and situational constraints) and work engagement.

According to the executives of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, work-related stress is one of the biggest health and safety challenges that workers face in Europe (Holmgren, Sandheimer, Mardby, Larsson, Bültmann, Hange & Hensing, 2016). Over the past three decades there has been a growing belief in all sectors of employment and in government that the experience of stress at work has undesirable consequences for the health and safety of individuals and for the health of their organizations (Landy & Conte, 2016). This confidence has been reflected both in public and media interest and in cumulative concern voiced by the trades unions, and professional and scientific bodies (Hoefsmit & Cleef, 2018). The national certificate in construction health and safety (NEBOSH, 2015) from United Kingdom has published and reviewing their Management Ethics as an approach to risk assessment which providing guidelines for public on managing the work-related stress. They all have intensive figures and analysis 5 on work stress (Ferrett, E., & Hughes, 2015)

Furthermore, stress has been observed in a wide diversity of professional groups such as teachers, nurses, accountants, managers, and pilots. To date, little attention has been devoted to examining job-related stress among workers in Shared Services and Outsourcing (SSO) companies. The limited research which exists on this topic usually

focused on call centre or data process centre workers or information technology consultants (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan and Hoagwood, 2015). Besides, they observed researches on job stress in Jordan are rarely found, particularly in SSO industry. Thus, it is important for managers and organizations to understand the stressors experienced by shared services outsourcing personnel in order to assist them in better managing stress experienced at the workplace.

Stress is an adaptive response to an external situation that results in physical, psychological or behavioral variations for organizational participation (Ahmad et al., 2009; Hussain et al., 2013). Besides that, stress is a condition of physical and psychological mental illness when the resources are unable to fulfill the demand of an individual (Hussain et al., 2013). Basically, the term of stress came from physical science which means that force placed upon an object that causes damage, bending or breaking. In case for human being, stress was often used to describe the bodies responses to demand placed on it whether these demand were favorable or unfavorable (Mansoor et al., 2011). Whereas work stress defined by NIOSH (1999) can be concluded as a harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirement of the job does not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the employees. In other words, stress described as people feel pressure personally. Moreover, employee perceives the stressful situation as something that is threatening to them. The employee's emotional, behavioral and physiological response to stress has a direct relationship to the characteristics of the stressor, the resources of the stressor and the employee's personal characteristics (Colligan & Higgin, 2005). Examples major causes of creating stress among employees are poor salary packages, long working hours and mistreatment of supervisors with employees (Hussain et al., 2013). Undoubtedly, stress is essential because it is a part of living and it helps to contribute on personal growth, development and mental health. However, nowadays, employees have to face numerous of negative stressors in their daily life. Also, stress will become dysfunctional when the amount is too excessive and prolonged. It may harm individual health, mood, productivity, relationships and quality of life (Zimbardo et al., 2003). There are various unfavorable outcomes of stress such as development of negative emotion (e.g. hatred, hopeless, anger and the urge to revenge), health problem (e.g. insomnia, asthma, ulcers and heart disease) and impact on job performance (e.g. absenteeism from workplace, turnover, decrease in productivity and efficiency) (Anderson & Puluch, 2001; Levin, 2002; Hussain et al., 2013; Mukambika & Kotian, 2016).

In Cox de Moura Leite, (2010) article, the Managing Director of Price Water House Coopers claims that one of the stress issues with the clients in SSO is the performance management as they 6 need to consistently measure their performances. A research in Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) employees in Jordan , as one of the earliest entry in SSO business in Jordanian  and one of the most preferred SSO location, indicated that the employees are disillusioned because pressure for performance is high (Srivastav, 2008). Taken from Phillips's research in 2017, the most common factors of job stress amongst BPO staffs in Jordan  includes dealing with technology, changes in policies, demanding customers, time pressure, monitoring, lacking of training and etc. The demand control model shows that high demand with low control contribute to strain, particularly when combined with home stress and the absence of social support (Jourdain & Vézina, 2014).

By leaving stress unaddressed, employers invite an increase in impulsive time off, absenteeism rates, and health care costs all of which hurt a company's bottom line"

(Allen, 2018). As suggested by Saufi, Leong, Chua, & Eranza, (2017), it is essential to be aware of the importance of extra-organisational sources of stress could affect the performance and mental and physical health of the individual at work. Therefore, as either to prevent job stress, to lower the job stress or to improve the workplace quality, it is necessary to study the possible sources and manifestations of stress in a specific occupational group, like SSO employees in Jordan.

## 2.1. Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis

Basing on the theoretical lenses of the resource based view , the study has drawn the following conceptual framework.
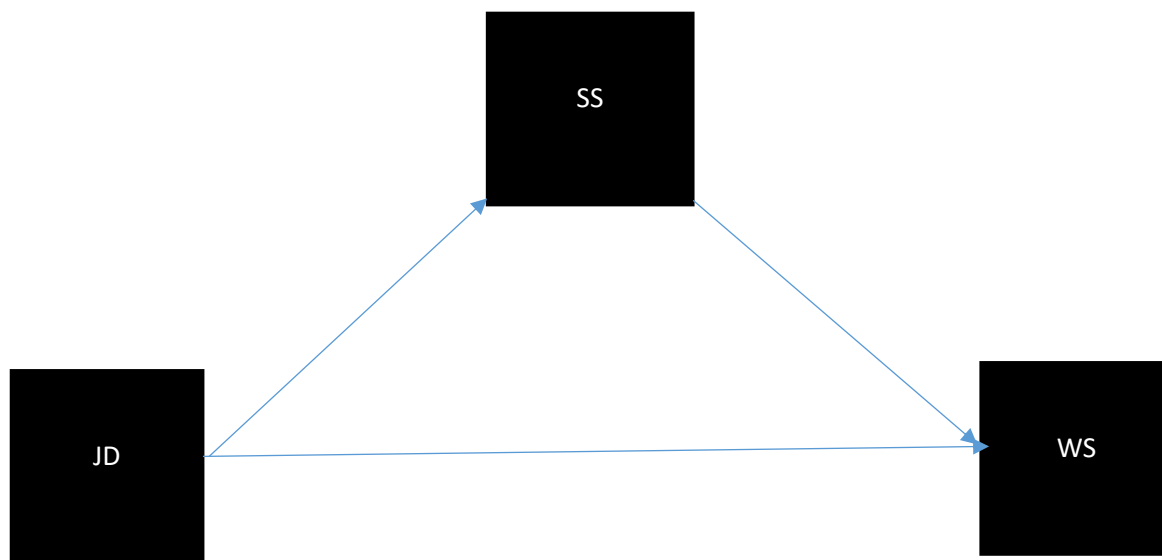


**Figure 1: Conceptual framework**

**H1:** Job demand (JD) has significant impact on the work stress (WS).

**H2:** Job demand (JD) has significant impact on the social support (SS).

**H3:** Social support (SS) has significant impact on the work stress (WS).

**H4:** Social support (SS) mediates the relationship between job demand (JD) and work stress (WS).

## 3.0. Methodology

The current study is carried out to explore the nexus among JD, SS, and WS. The currents study has employed the quantitative approach. The quotative approach used the surveys-based methodology the reason why the quantitative research design has been framing for this study, is that it helps a researcher in thoroughly examining the large sample of respondents and then generalizing their responses. Meanwhile it also helps a researcher in obtaining the summarized behaviour of respondents participating in the study. This study which has employee the quantitative method has adapted a questionnaire to quantify the responses and opinion regarding issues raised in this study. The use of questionnaire also helps a researcher in understanding the relationship between set of dependent, independent and intervening variables. The questionnaire was designed according to the objectives, problem and hypotheses of the study to determine the relative importance of factors that may control the employees'

performance in the manufacturing organizations of Indonesia. The data collected through the surveys were loaded into the Microsoft Excel, the IBM SPSS, and Smart-PLS. The five-point Likert scale is used to operationalize the variables and their sub constructs. The questioner is adapted from the previous studies.

## 4.0. Research Analysis and Discussion

To achieve the objective of the current study we have employed the PLS-SEM. The PLS-SEM, according to Basheer et al., (2019), the PLS-SEM is second generation is structural equation modelling, which not only new but also a robust as it integrates all the model into a structure of the equation and produces results with a simultaneous operation by producing a relationship with all direct and intervening phenomena. The SEM-PLS, which in modern times is one of the robust techniques to analyse the data on social issues is used as the statistical tool in currents stud. Recently many researchers such Hair et al. (2014) and Hameed et (2018) has employed and argued that whenever we are dealing with some novelty in conceptual models or need an advance assessment of any existing phenomena, we prefer SEM-PLS over other technique such as multiple regression analysis. The, we are dealing with The Hair et al. (2014) argued that the PLS-SEM is a two-step equation, which is an advance form of multiple regression and accounts for two assessment namely the inner model assessment and the outer model assessment. The first step is estimation of the reliability and validity of the model. In Smart-PLS, after obtaining the results of reliability and validity for each construct, examining the structural model results is necessary in order to test the hypothesis. There are five steps of procedures in examining the structural model results; (1) examine the structural model for collinearity issues; (2) the significance of path coefficients; (3) followed by examining the level of R2 values; (4) assessment of f2 effect size; and last but not least, (5) examining the predictive relevance (Q2 and the q2 effect size).The reason why the SEM-PLS is preferred our the multiple regression is that the earlier handles the multiple equations simultaneously and can produces results with a simultaneous operation by producing a relationship with all direct and intervening phenomena.

Validity and reliability of data were inspected in the initial step of analysis of data. Measures of composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha were examined. The value of 0.70 is considered as an acceptable value for the measure of Cronbach alpha. Furthermore, threshold level of 0.70 as mentioned by Hameed et al. (2018),for composite reliability was also observed. Moreover, average variance extracted, and factor loadings were analysed for observing convergent validity and internal consistency. According to Hameed et al. (2018) , factor loadings and AVE must be above 0.5. In the present study, the values of AVE and factor loadings are above 0.5. In addition, external consistency was also examined using discriminant validity.

Table 1: Factor Loading

| Indicators | Loadings | CR | AVE |
|---|---|---|---|

| JD | JD1 | .722 | 0.915 | 0.812 |
| | JD2 | .955 | | |
| | JD3 | .990 | | |
| | JD5 | .825 | | |
| SS | SS1 | .843 | 0.895 | 0.772 |
| | SS2 | .855 | | |
| | SS4 | .802 | | |
| | SS5 | .925 | | |
| WS | WS1 | .884 | 0.932 | 0.617 |
| | WS3 | .955 | | |
| | WS4 | .903 | | |

The discriminate validity is one of the measures to examine the interrelationship of the reflective variables with their own indicators. Basically, it shows or measure that the measurement or operationalization of the variables which genuinely are not linked are linked in the case of study. Fornell-Larcker has introduced one of the robust and widely used measure of discriminate validity therefore the current study is using this value as a base to evaluate the discriminate validity. According to Basheer et al. (2019) index of the reliability of a variable must be greater than 0.70. However, the values in cross loadings were same with outer loadings value, the difference is in cross loadings it compares with correlation among constructs. Concisely, the result of evaluating the discriminant validity of this study thru Fornell-Larcker Criterion and Cross Loadings is shown in the table 2

Table 2. Discriminant Validity

| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| JD | 0.948 | | |
| SS | 0.731 | 0.798 | |
| WS | 0.518 | 0.550 | 0.801 |

In the next step of data analysis, in order to test the proposed hypotheses that were developed on the literature a PLS bootstrapping was employed. A threshold level of 1.96 t-value was set for the rejection or acceptance of hypotheses. Firstly, all the observed relationships have exhibited t-value of more than 1.96, thus showing acceptance of all the set of direct hypotheses including H1, and H2.

Table 3. Direct Effect

|    | (β)   | SD    | T-value | P-Values |
|----|-------|-------|---------|----------|
| H1 | 0.111 | 0.035 | 3.161   | 0.002    |
| H2 | 0.207 | 0.043 | 4.810   | 0.000    |
| H3 | 0.231 | 0.021 | 2.710   | 0.000    |

Moreover, Table 4 highlights the Moderating effect of SSCG in the relationship between the SCM and CS. These results of moderation show that for both moderation hypothesis, the t-value is above 1.96 and p-value is below 0.05 which accept H3

Table 4. In-Direct Effect through Mediation

|    | (β)   | SD    | T-value | P-Values |
|----|-------|-------|---------|----------|
| H4 | 0.109 | 0.018 | 4.319   | 0.000    |

Predictive power of the structural model can be assessed by the R2 value of the endogenous construct (Hair et al. 2012). Thus, R-squared simply defined as the "percent of variance explained" by the model. In this study the R2 value is 0.441, which suggesting that 54.1 % of the variance is explained by the independent variables

Table 5. Expected Variance

|    | $R^2$  |
|----|--------|
| WS | 54.1%  |

The results of the current study have shown a great deal of agreement with the hypothesized results.

**Conclusion**

The study also aim to contribute to organization management as well as to the existing empirical studies. In organization context, the result of the study should be able to provide additional reference for organization management in order to create a healthier workplace, redesigning job functions or workplace structure, plan on workforce, improve morality and productivity among workers. Organization with Shared Services and Outsourcing (SSO) background particularly may have better thought on drafting their strategies with the study results as the reference. On the academic context, this study should be able to provide more data in existing founding, with referring to the relationships between job demands and social support on work stress. Besides, this could be a new and additional input on study of work stress under the local context (Jordan) and with a focus on SSO employees.

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