

DETERMINANTS OF EMPLOYEE DEVIANCE IN  
MALAYSIAN EMERGENCY SERVICES MEDIATED BY JOB  
SATISFACTION

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## **ABSTRACT**

Employee deviance has turned out to be one of the most complex issues suffers by organizations as this issue is inherently associated with business and human costs. The business costs of employee deviance including bad publicity, lost work time, increased insurance premiums and etc. Recent years in Malaysia, employees of Malaysia's Emergency Services were highlighted by local newspapers that their employees are involved in incidents of crime, such as abusing power, withheld aid for flood victims, and illicit acts. Several incidents were apprehended in the General Audit reports. These incidences prompted a thorough investigation to address the theory and practical gaps. Data were collected from employees of Malaysia's Emergency Services. The statistical analysis methods used in this study were descriptive statistics (i.e. mean, standard deviation, and percentage) and inferential statistics (i.e. t-Test, ANOVA, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using Partial Least Square (PLS). The results of the study have revealed that procedural justice, perceived organizational support, time stress and job satisfaction are significant predictors of interpersonal deviance. Next, time stress, distributive justice, procedural justice, perceived organizational support, negative affect, and jobs satisfaction are significant predictors of organizational deviance. Prevention of employee deviant behaviors help to boost positive branding and enhances transformation of emergency services organizations.

## APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised / read this study and that in my opinion it conform to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in quality and scope, as a thesis for the fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the thesis submitted in fulfilment of the PhD degree is my own work and that all contributions from any other persons or sources are properly and duly cited. I further declare that the material has not been submitted either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university. In making this declaration, I understand and acknowledge any breaches in this constitute academic misconduct, which may result in my expulsion from the programme and/or from the award of the degree.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MERS 999	Malaysian Emergency Response Services
PMO	Prime Minister Office
NADMA	National Agency of Disaster Management
NKRA	National Key Result Areas
GTP	Government Transformation Program
CUEPACS	Congress of Union of Employees in the Public and Civil Services Malaysia
M	Mean
SD	Standard Deviation
PLS	Partial Least Square

## **CHAPTER 1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 Introduction**

The initial chapter of this thesis presents the background of the study. It provides an overview of the Malaysian Emergency Services, its impact, and the significance of discovering employee deviance in the Malaysian Emergency Services. This chapter further deliberates on the problem statement that adds to the development of the research objectives and research questions. Subsequently, a discussion of the significance of the study and the definition of the key terms used is presented, followed by a summary of the organization of this thesis.

### **1.1 Background of the study**

Employee morality is important for the effective functioning and productivity of organizations (Boye & Slora, 1993; Brough, 2005). However, each day, employees face potential threatening experiences such as bullying, harassment, spreading rumors, theft and other deviant behaviors. The victims of deviant acts are not able to escape the social situation while the oppressor takes pride on his/her actions. As a result, these victims often suffer in silence.

According to Chechak and Csiernik (2014), employee deviance is a not a rare or unpredictable occurrence. Employee deviance refers to voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). This act threatens the well-being of organizations as well as the individuals within the organization (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). A survey conducted by Boye and Slora (1993), identified that 25% of supermarket

employees are involved in shoplifting. While a study on public servants in Pakistan by Bashir, Nasir, Qayyum and Bashir (2012) showed that 94% of employees take longer lunch/ prayer breaks while 90% make long personal calls using the company's official telephone. In this regard, the deviant situations demonstrated could be just the tip of an iceberg, and subsequently, organizations suffer losses due to their employees' acts.

Psychology researchers believe that of employee deviance, specifically among emergency services employees, is due to traumatic work experiences, daily work pressures, and individual circumstances (Cannavò, La Torre, Sestili, La Torre, & Fioravanti, 2019; Miller, 1995, 1999). It was found that employees of emergency service have a rather distinct set of attitudes, training and defense system (Miller, 1995, 1999). This uniqueness could be part of their defense to explain behaviors, which are considered as deviant. Emergency service providers and the administrators have to realize their employees' unique traits, and identify the causes of disruptive, violent, aggressive or deviant behaviors (Cannavò et al., 2019). If employees are triggered to develop violent, aggressive, or deviant behaviors (Guy, Newman, & Ganapati, 2013; Miller, 1995, 1999; Rees, 1995), then, organizations and their administrators could formulate an effective prevention program (Cannavò et al., 2019).

In Malaysia, every time a person dials 999, the caller will expect the emergency situation to be taken seriously and handled competently. The emergency services personnel will attend the emergency speedily. However, most callers seem to take for granted the fact that emergency services personnel are always on standby to deliver the needs of emergency services

and they tend to complain when the services provided are not as prompt as expected. Emergency services personnel are routinely exposed to life-threatening situations, daily pressures and unexpected circumstances and still, they are required to remain calm and professional at all times (Miller, 1995, 1999), to ensure they could carry out their job effectively (Cannavò et al., 2019). In some cases, the increased pressure becomes an impediment to the emergency services personnel to act promptly (Miller, 1995, 1999). Emergency services personnel are also on the verge of losing control, and as a result, they respond in an aggressive, agitated or violent manner (Brough, 2005; Miller, 1995, 1999; Paton, 2005).

The following paragraphs provide an overview of the Malaysian Emergency Services, why it is vital, and the importance of detecting employee deviance in this highly sought-after service organization in Malaysia.

#### 1.1.1 Overview of Emergency Services in Malaysia

In general, the Malaysian Emergency Service providers can be categorized as the public and the private Emergency Services organizations. The public Emergency Services organizations encompass of government funded national service organizations working together with the Malaysian Emergency Response Services (MERS 999) national call center. The function of the MERS 999 national call center is to dispatch emergency calls to one of the five relevant public Emergency Services organizations after all the incoming emergency calls have been filtered. The public Emergency Services organizations have respective agencies that respond to a broad range of emergency situation. The Prime Minister Office (PMO) oversees the operation of these public Emergency Services organizations. These public Emergency

Service organizations assist, receive and attend to a number of emergency situations, such as fire, accidents and medical emergency to prevent the loss of life, and damages to properties. Moreover, they are also responsible for post disaster recovery and redevelopment activities. Such services are also provided by private Emergency Services organizations. However, instead of using the MERS call center, private emergency services are dispatched when clients contact private Emergency Service organizations directly to request for medical aid services.

According to Telekom Malaysia, an average of 1.1 million emergency calls a day are received via the MERS 999 hotline (Yuen, 2019). These emergency calls are dispatched and connected to any one of the five public agencies, based on the nature of the emergency being reported. In Malaysia, emergency services comprise of humanitarian relief, crime fighting, firefighting and prevention, marine safety and medical service. In Malaysia, humanitarian aid agencies such as the civil defense force and the ministry of health's ambulance services, have the largest emergency services coverage, ranging from first aid treatment, transferring victims to the nearest hospital, providing medical treatment to victims and also non-medical assistance, such as providing and monitoring food and shelter for victims, preventing of any incidents that might put lives at risk and/or damage to properties, as well as public education. In general, humanitarian agencies received the most cases through MERS 999 compared to other agencies that are responsible for disaster prevention and rescue works. Meanwhile, the police department is referred to as a crime prevention agency while the fire department is responsible to respond to any cases related to fire. Furthermore, the Malaysian

Maritime Enforcement Agency will be in full control when attending to emergency calls that happened at sea. Finally, hospitals provide medical services at the end of the service delivery chain to treat individuals with medical concerns.

The functions of the humanitarian agencies under the Malaysian Emergency Services can be broadly categorized into three stages, namely before, during and after emergency situations. Under MERS 999, humanitarian agencies, such as the civil defense force department are considered as the first responder to attend to all medical and non-medical emergency situations, before the case is being referred to other relevant agencies. In this regard, they play the role as a 'bridge' between the public and other Emergency Services agencies which more specific roles. The role of the private Emergency Services organizations in Malaysia is mainly to provide ambulance service or other medical assistances, which are chargeable to the caller, which is why not many callers will contact the private Emergency Services organizations.

#### 1.1.2 The importance of the humanitarian agency in Malaysian Emergency Services

The prominence of the humanitarian agencies under Emergency Services is evident through their social service contributions. Humanitarian agencies have significant contribution as they help those in dire situation to safe lives, as well as to help recovery efforts a tragedy. Furthermore, it is not entirely attributable to the humanitarian agency, humanitarian aids assist victims to develop adaptive resilience (Diaz, 2013), and help reduce mortality rate, pains and

grieves all around the world (Quevillon, Gray, Erickson, Gonzalez, & Jacobs, 2016).

The humanitarian agencies under the Malaysian Emergency Services have been recognized as the most crucial and proactive agencies because they play critical role before, during and after emergency situations, disasters or other major hazardous relief operations. In this light, the federal government has conducted a wide-ranging formal evaluation of the roles and tasks of these agencies, and this subsequently have led to the development of the National Agency of Disaster Management (NADMA) in 2015. NADMA is the agency responsible in responding to high-risk emergency calls and at the same time, maintaining daily low-risk emergency calls and supervise ambulance services, humanitarian support and educating the public on emergency situations. Thus, this agency needs to improve the overall disaster resilience strategies and Emergency Response and Recovery plans, as determined by the quality and efficiency of their employees. However, recent incidences have demonstrated that these resilience strategies and plans should be comprehensively revised to consider issues related to employees, infrastructure, critical response time and emergency response planning; for instance, the slow response during the 2014 East Coast Flood incidence, demonstrated the weak inter-organization coordination, as well as between organizations and their employees. The 2014 East Coast Recovery Plan has reemphasized the critical role of providing organizational support to all Emergency Services employees to reduce negative reactions to stressful emergency work (Quevillon et al., 2016).

Subsequently, the federal government developed the National Emergency Planning Guidance 2015 to improve coordination between

responding agencies and organizations when responding to major incidents and managing recovery. The Guidance emphasizes that all Malaysian Emergency Services organizations are obligated to have the capacity to withstand high service delivery despite any infrastructure interruption, and also the capacity to join forces with other agencies in order to ensure their ability in reacting to major incidents (NADMA, 2017). However, the 2014 East Coast Flood presented a tremendously challenging task to the unforeseen problems of interrupted supplies which threatened the safety of victims, limit rescue works and threatened the well-being of the emergency rescuers. Furthermore, it was reported that some of the rescue personnel did not receive their disaster deployment allowance six months after the disaster relief efforts ended.

While the guideline presents a comprehensive disaster recovery plans and recovery strategies according to their needs and vision (PEMANDU, 2017), it does not fully reflect the difficulty in the communicating the procedures and carrying out the works on the ground. This could deceive organizations and employees and might hinder the planning process disasters in the real setting. This, combined with organizational procedures and employee characteristics, are hard to recognize. In addition, such unclear linkage may lead to higher vulnerability towards aggression, violence, and service disruption, which could decrease the efficiency of service delivery and threatens the service continuity of humanitarian aids.

Employees of the humanitarian agencies under the Malaysian Emergency Services are the backbones for the growth of public health and the social service sector in Malaysia (PEMANDU, 2017). Therefore, empowering

them will have a positive impact to Malaysia, specifically in addressing public needs, especially during emergency scenarios. This includes the use of technology and tools during recovery works as well as to provide food and temporary shelters to the victims in times of emergency. In this light, increasing human skills and infrastructure have an enormous potential to enhance human lives.

In the meantime, employees of emergency services have received considerable scrutiny due to the demanding aspects of these jobs to attend to emergency situations (Cheryl, 2019). This then necessitates workplaces to develop an understanding on the range of actions that constitutes employee deviance and a corresponding range of prevention initiatives (Wankhade, Stokes, Tarba, & Rodgers, 2019).

In an effort to gauge the potential to improve human lives, the Government of Malaysia has included social services participation in the Government's social and welfare program as a key focus of the Government Transformation Program (GTP). GTP aims to steer Malaysia forward to become a developed nation by 2020. GTP consists of six National Key Result Areas (NKRA), which aspires to transform public services and ensuring the efficiency and accountable of government infrastructure. Social services have become the target of the NKRA because of its crucial and robust development within the last decades and its potential to generate significant multiplier effects. The social service is centered around bringing both public and private sectors into collaboration and aims to recognize initiatives and opportunities, particularly from the private sector, to produce the social community ecosystem in an even more organized and coherent manner. Hence, it is

anticipated to increase community interaction within neighborhoods and advance public services to be as efficient as possible (PEMANDU, 2017).

Malaysian Emergency Services organizations have been operating before Second World War II. It has been delivering critical services ever since, and it is expected to remain as a crucial organization in Malaysia for many years to come. With the record of delivering crucial and robust social services in the past seven decades, employees of the humanitarian agency in the Malaysian Emergency Services are expected to be efficient in responding to emergency scenarios. As a result, employers need to understand their employee's needs, taking care of their well-being and supporting their growth are essential to reduce any deviant acts because it is detrimental to organizational performance.

### 1.1.3 The importance of understanding employee deviance in Malaysia

Psychology researchers believe deviant acts among the emergency services personnel are due to work environment, work-related pressure, and individual characteristics (Cannavò et al., 2019; Brough, 2005; Guy et al., 2013; Miller, 1995, 1999). Employees of emergency services are constantly experiencing overwhelming trauma and daily pressure of emergency situations, and these overwhelming circumstances may cause them to develop deviant behaviors (Cannavò et al., 2019; Miller, 1995).

Employee deviance in the Malaysian public organizations have become one of the most disturbing issue in recent times (Alias, Rasdi, Ismail, & Samah, 2013b, 2013a), and if employee deviance is not prevented, it can destroy the future of an organization (Abdullah & Halim, 2016). In 2016, the Congress of Union of Employees in the Public and Civil Services Malaysia