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Article

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The Impact of Verbal abuse and Vindictive Customer Behaviors on Food Rider Job Stress: The Moderating of Social Support to Employee Job Stress

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study investigated whether food delivery riders experienced stress due to verbal abuse and vindictive customer behavior in food delivery services. Furthermore, moderating effects of social support were tested to see whether they decreased the job stress caused by verbal abuse and vindictive customer behaviors. This study examined if real-time feedback can reduce employee job stress. Finally, this study evaluated whether real-time feedback influences employee engagement.

Design/methodology/approach: The paper presented descriptive research to examine the relationship between verbal abuse and vindictive customer behavior, employee job stress, social support, real-time employee feedback, and engagement in Malaysia's food delivery services. This study focused on individual employees who have experience dealing with verbal abuse and vindictive customer behaviors in Klang Valley, Malaysia. Online surveys by Google forms and printed questionnaires were distributed to the respondents to obtain the information. To examine the relationship, the analysis was done using SPSS and AMOS for empirical analysis.

Findings: The findings showed that verbal abuse was negatively related to employees' job stress, except vindictive customers have positively related and confirmed that social support moderates the relationship between vindictive customers and employees' job stress. Besides that, social support also moderates the relationship between vindictive customers and employees' job stress. The study succeeded in supporting the relationship between employee job stress and real-time employee feedback. Also, the results indicate positive support for the relationship between real-time feedback and employee engagement.

Research limitations/implications: The study only focused on the food delivery sector; therefore, this study suggests that future studies should cover wide areas of the service industry. It is because jay-customer behaviors are known not only within the food delivery sector, future studies could replicate similar investigations in other service organizations such as hotels, restaurants, airlines, banks, and hospitals in the Malaysian context. Also, for the implication, to respond to events involving verbal abuse and vindictive customer, management can gather important information from workers who experience these behaviors and develop solutions based on their experience.

Originality/value: The study is novel in its application of the conservation of resources (COR) theory to the study of verbal abuse and vindictive customer from food delivery employee's perspective and with social support from supervisors in Malaysian food delivery services scenario.

Keywords: social support, job stress, food delivery, Malaysia, jay-customer

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I. Introduction

Following the COVID-19 epidemic, many countries, including Malaysia that implemented the Movement Control Order (MCO) starting on March 18, 2020 (The Asean Post, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has raised the demand for food delivery services, eventually replacing the demand for dining out (Oh and Yi, 2023). As a result, the year 2020 appears to be the beginning of the golden age of food delivery (Chotigo and Kadono, 2021). Food delivery requires riders to send ordered food to the customer's location, and riders face some challenges when dealing with customers. Riders are not immune to seeing unusual customers, entertaining unique requests, and dealing with various issues and also encounter difficulties when some consumers verbally assault some of them (Landau, 2020). Recent research claims that customer rudeness, also known as jay-customer behavior, is more severe in hospitality-related organizations (Boukis et al., 2020). Jay-customer is a dysfunctional customer who purposefully or inadvertently disrupts service to harm the organization, workers, or other consumers through sexual harassment, verbal abuse, and physical assault (Lovelock, 1994), especially those who work in the hospitality industry, such as in restaurants or hotels that are more likely to encounter rude customers (Bi et al., 2021; Hwang et al., 2021). Despite several studies on jay-customer behaviors in other settings, research in the context of online food delivery service is still scarce and remains unexplored.

Somasundari (2018) found that job stress has been reported to affect workers' performance in the online food delivery industry. Consequently, stressed employees seek social support from their co-workers or supervisors who can comfort them to cope with these job stresses and motivate them (Hobfoll et al., 2018). For example, when employees feel socially supported by their restaurant managers or supervisors, they can respond more appropriately to the customer's inappropriate behavior (Hwang et al., 2021). Geldart et al. (2018) reported that when a positive outcome

is that co-worker support helps to mitigate the adverse effects of rude and disrespectful behavior. On the other hand, to prevent an employee from becoming demotivated or experiencing job stress due to jay-customer behavior, the food delivery firm can use a real-time feedback application that allows the employees to express their feelings. Nowadays, with technology improvements, it is possible to give and receive performance feedback via a real-time feedback application (Huang et al., 2019). Not only that, employee engagement can be changed if employees use a real-time employee feedback application as it drives employees to do a better job and lessen employee job stress.

Nevertheless, despite many studies on jay-customer behaviors in hotel and restaurant settings from other countries, there is minimal discussion about jay-customer behaviors, which are verbal abuse and vindictive customer, and how it affects the employee's job stress, particularly in the online food delivery industry in Malaysia context. This study would like to confirm that social support could reduce employees' stress due to disappointing service experiences with rude customers. Additionally, the study emphasized that the conservation of resources (COR) theory helps explain how jay-customer behaviors affect employee job stress and how social support reduces job stress. Finally, this study anticipated that the organization's real-time feedback assists the employee in giving fast feedback on their daily work experience.

II. Literature Review

According to Lovelock (1994), a jay-customer is a customer who may purposefully or intentionally misbehave and cause service disruptions by sexual harassment, physical assault, and verbal abuse. According to other researchers, such hostile jay-customer behavior during a service encounter is referred to as jay-customer behavior (Bi et al., 2021), dysfunctional customer behavior (Hwang et al.,

2021), deviant consumer behavior (Hu et al., 2020), customer mistreatment (Bednarska and Łuka, 2022).

Previous jay-customer behavior studies generally focused on hospitality sectors, especially hotels, and restaurants (Chung et al., 2021; Hwang et al., 2021; Bi et al., 2021; Hu et al., 2020). However, to the best of the authors' knowledge, limited jay-customer behavior studies thus far have been conducted in the food delivery industry, particularly in Malaysia, leaving a gap to be filled by the current research.

Numerous studies have concentrated on a particular type of jay-customer behavior. In contrast, others take a broader view of the issues by identifying various types of jay-customer behavior within an industry (Fong et al., 2017). Combined with the previous research background, this study focuses on two aspects of jay-customer behavior: verbal abuse and vindictive customers. Customer verbal abuse could cause psychological stress, such as a sense of embarrassment or insult, and is most likely to raise job stress, showed by exhaustion, workplace stress, and burnout, as perceived by frontline personnel, which corresponds to prior findings (Alola et al., 2019). It is anticipated that customer verbal abuse contributed to service employees' job stress. Job stress is the term used to describe the physiological and psychological responses to stressors greater than a person's immediate capacity for coping. Specifically, customer verbal abuse that, when it occurs, may be unavoidable to frontline employees (Karatepe et al., 2009). According to Bi et al. (2021), customers' verbal abuse significantly affected frontline employees' job stress and job burnout.

On the other hand, vindictive customers are those who engage in intentional and overt acts of malevolent behavior for personal or financial benefit (Harris and Reynolds, 2004). Grégoire et al. (2018) reported that there were three dimensions of retaliatory behavior, namely negative word of mouth, which refers to unfavorably communicating with other customers in order to disparage the organization, vindictive complaining, which refers to turning on the company and abusing its representatives or employees, and negative publicity, which refers to complaining to

a third-party consumer website or social media in order to publicize the firm's misbehavior. Following Sweiss et al. (2022), 76% of respondents said they had experienced negative word of mouth, 70.7% said they had witnessed vindictive complaining, and 82% said they had seen negative publicity.

Therefore, based on the above argument, this study argues that customer verbal abuse and vindictive customer have a positive relationship with the employee's job stress, which leads to the first and second hypotheses of the study:

Hypothesis 1: A customer's verbal abuse positively influences employees' job stress.

Hypothesis 2: A customer's vindictive customer positively influences employees' job stress.

In a similar vein, long work hours have been shown in certain research to lead to psychological stress and job stress (Hsu, 2019). Apart from that, the COVID-19 pandemic can potentially worsen stress and emotional tiredness among restaurant frontline personnel, who are known to experience greater stress than in other industries due to long working hours and frequent customer interactions (Han et al., 2016). Asensio-Martnez et al. (2019) mentioned that occupational stress is a severe problem among those who work in the hospitality industry. Certain occupations in the workplace are more stressful than others, and each person responds to the situation differently (Anbazhagan et al., 2013; Hasan and Tumah, 2019). Even though some stressors may be universal to all jobs, the stressors may differ depending on the degree or type of employment (Ahmad et al., 2021). Since they must deal with customers, employees in service sectors such as restaurants, hotels, and casinos are vulnerable to job stress (Bi et al., 2021; Chung et al., 2021). Because it is, by definition, a customer-focused business, the hospitality sector is more stressful than most other sectors for its employees (Shi et al., 2022).

Apart from the hospitality industry, the restaurant industry is likewise customer-focused. The restaurant industry is highly service-oriented, with frontline personnel dealing directly with consumers (Oh and

Yi, 2023). Jay-customer behavior is the most common source of job stress in the restaurant industry (Bie et al., 2021; Alola et al., 2019; Han et al., 2016). Thereby, the present study wants to examine the food delivery industry because food delivery riders also need to deal with customer behavior when delivering food to a customer.

Employees who are usually stressed during work are probably influenced to use real-time feedback applications to quickly gather feedback from their supervisors or co-workers and solve it immediately. Cohen (2015) recommends a real-time feedback system helps trainees perform better in demanding circumstances. The objective is to reinforce a feedback culture that enables employees to gain quick insight into their performance. Real-time feedback applications are increasingly being used for performance reviews. They are known as 360-degree feedback, allowing feedback from employees to supervisors, supervisors to employees, peers, and themselves (Goodwin 2016).

Bas Kohnke, the CEO and co-founder of the Impraise application in 2014, found that the Impraise app assists employees in receiving more quick evaluations while minimizing the amount of human resources busywork their managers must process. Additionally, the Impraise app also allows co-workers to communicate feedback anonymously (Shu, 2016). For instance, there are situations when issues arise at work locations that site staff are unable to resolve. In these cases, electronic communication technologies enable real-time conversation with supervisors or co-workers off-site to discover potential solutions, resulting in little disturbance to the work process (Ganster and Perrewe, 2010). Real-time feedback suits today's fast-paced business climate and a younger, tech-savvy workforce (Achievers, 2015).

Based on the above discussion, this study assumes that real-time feedback can be a valuable method to overcome employee job stress. Hence, this study proposes that employee job stress has a positive relationship with the use of real-time feedback as follows:

Hypothesis 3: Employee job stress positively influences the used of real-time employee feedback.

According to Burnett and Lisk (2019), when it comes to measuring and tracking employee engagement, most businesses have not advanced and continue to analyze engagement on an annual or longer basis using traditional survey approaches. Furthermore, organizations use real-time feedback systems to establish and support a feedback environment that increases employee performance. Numerous sectors have been transformed by the emergence of real-time application-based feedback solutions (Hao et al., 2017). Employee engagement is how employees commit to something or someone in their organization, how hard they work, and how long they stay due to that commitment (Lockwood, 2007). On the other hand, employee engagement relates to an individual's involvement and satisfaction in an organization and enthusiasm for their job (Harter et al., 2002). Furthermore, various studies on employee engagement have been based on earlier research (Brunett and Lisk, 2019; Smith, 2018). Individual job satisfaction and engagement impact a person's decision to show up for work, put in their greatest productive effort, stay with the organization and positively influence the work environment and culture. According to Rivera et al. (2021), organizations should consider if, how, and when real-time feedback apps may be integrated into their communication and performance management strategies as this trend develops.

Based on this discussion, this study assumes that the organization can encourage good employee engagement by using real-time feedback. The employee can overcome employee job stress caused by jay-customer behaviors. Hence, this study proposes that the used of real-time employee feedback has a positive relationship with employee engagement as follows:

Hypothesis 4: The used of real-time employee feedback positively influences employee engagement.

Some common strategies can be used to deal with stressful situations, such as problem-focused coping, avoidance, and seeking social support (Elziny and Kamel, 2020). Bradley and Cartwright (2002) also

argued that social support in the workplace is recognized as a factor in job stress. Social support benefits mental health in two ways: directly, in that it improves health and well-being regardless of stress, and indirectly, in that it functions as a buffer, mitigating the negative impacts of stressful situations. Social support refers to people's perceptions of love, care, and respect shown by others (Sarafino and Smith, 2014; Yousaf et al., 2020). Social support also can be defined as the assistance provided by those the individual is in contact with to reduce the individual's stress levels (Lewin and Sager, 2008). There are several support sources accessible to employees in order to minimize the consequences of job stressors, including the organization itself, the co-workers, the supervisors, and external surroundings such as family or friends (Isfianadewi and Noordyani, 2020)

A large body of research supports the idea that seeking social support lessens individual stress. These studies supported the notion that social support significantly impacts stress and reduces it in the workplace (Anbazhagan et al., 2013; Mossakowski and Zhang, 2014; Reid and Taylor, 2015). Social support may influence the stress response by lowering the perception or experience of work stressors, indirectly reducing the risk of undesirable outcomes like psychological illness (Kahar and Wee, 2020). Workers in the hospitality industry who receive strong social support are less susceptible to the harmful consequences of work stress (Yousaf et al., 2020). Additionally, according to Hwang et al. (2021), when

personnel who contact consumers feel socially supported by significant others, including their restaurant managers or supervisors, they can respond more appropriately to the customer's inappropriate behavior.

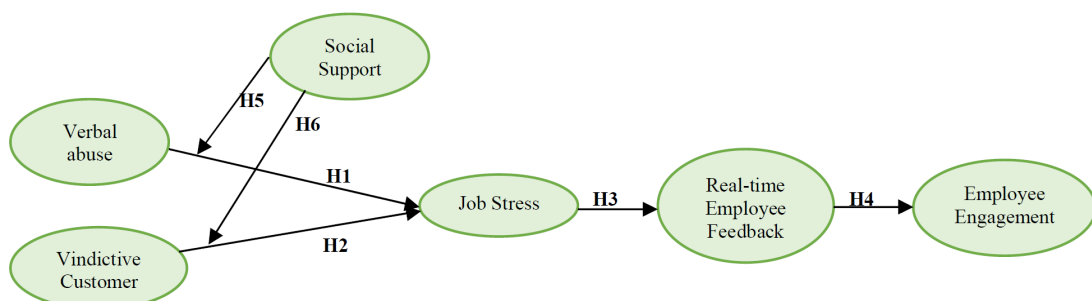
Several studies have been conducted on the relationship between social support, job stress, and jay-customer behaviors (Yousaf et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2019; Geldart et al., 2018). Empirical studies have also suggested the positive role of social support in organizations (Karatepe and Olugbade, 2017). This study assumes that social support can be beneficial for relieving job stress caused by jay-customer behavior. Thus, based on this discussion, this study suggests that social support is likely to moderate the impact of jay-customer behaviors, which are verbal abuse and vindictive customer on job stress in the following ways:

Hypothesis 5: Social support moderates the impact of a customer's verbal abuse on frontline employees' job stress.

Hypothesis 6: Social support moderates the impact of a customer's vindictive behavior on frontline employees' job stress.

Based on the above hypotheses, Figure 1 represents the study framework and the proposed hypotheses.

Earlier research has acknowledged theoretical approaches that rationalize jay-customer behaviors, job stress, and social support in the jay-customer behaviors study. For the current study, the conservation



Source: Authors' framework

Figure 1. Study Framework

of resources (COR) theory is the most suitable theory to guide the whole direction of the study.

In formulating theoretical perspectives for studying the jay-customer behaviors and their impact on food delivery riders, this study used the conservation of resources (COR) theory. COR theory provides a useful prototype. The COR theory is one of the most popular theories for describing human stress and well-being. Also, in working situations, COR has been used to demonstrate how employees' perceptions of resource losses lead to behaviors intended to assist them in replacing their lost resources (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll et al., 2018). Dr. Stevan created COR in 1989 to expand on the literature on stress as a construct (Hobfoll, 1989). The core ideas of COR theory are that people work hard to acquire and hold onto resources that are important to them and that, in terms of stress, resource loss affects people psychologically more than resource gain. Employees who face threats or the loss of specified resources experience stress at work. In addition, this theory's learning principles focus a particular emphasis on the crucial roles performed by psychological stress in three situations: when there was a threat of a loss of resources, an actual net loss of resources, and a shortage of obtained resources following the expenditure of resources (Hobfoll, 1989).

Kashif et al. (2017) have applied COR theory to investigate job stress, customer abuse, and emotional intelligence on employee turnover. Employees try to defend their ego, expertise, and abilities against negative pressures such as customer abuse. Keeping abreast with this assumption, COR theory is a useful framework to investigate how people retain, protect, and develop valuable resources to excel in their careers (Hobfoll, 1989).

This study draws on COR theory to shed light on food delivery riders' responses toward minimizing resource loss and recovering their lost resources caused by job demands, such as jay-customer behaviors. According to COR, the loss of valuable resources causes higher stress and drives employees to seek ways to recover lost resources (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll et al., 2018). Furthermore, the

conservation of resources (COR) theory predicts that people with more resources, which refers to more supportive colleagues, are less prone to stress. In comparison, those with fewer resources (less supportive colleagues) are more vulnerable to stress (Hobfoll, 1989). Defined as an employee's connections to people who can assist and the actual receipt of acts meant to help (Hobfoll and Stokes, 1988), social support reduces stress by boosting accessible resources. Simultaneously, one of the most generally sought-after resources from employees looking to restore resources depleted in their work is social support which is from supervisors and co-workers (Bordia et al., 2017) and re-establish their shattered morale and subjective well-being. Good supervisory support for frontline personnel can mitigate the negative impact of customer incivility on job burnout. Han et al. (2016) study revealed that organizational and supervisory support is vital in minimizing the link between customer incivility and employee burnout. This is consistent with previous Aloha et al. (2019) research findings that suggest customer incivility is a crucial factor affecting job stress and emotional exhaustion.

To sum up, this research aligns with the COR theory's argument outlined by Hobfoll (1989) that employees threatened by the fear of losing control over resources tend to conserve them. Social support for such employees may alleviate their efforts to preserve the available resources.

III. Methodology

A. Pre-test

The questionnaires were pre-tested to examine the questionnaire items' internal consistency, refine the questionnaires and disclose confusing questions. In this study, six constructs were investigated, namely, jay-customer behaviors (verbal abuse and vindictive customer), job stress, real-time employee feedback, and social support. To measure study constructs for

this current research, items validated in previously published studies were adapted and utilized (Parker and Decotiis, 1983; Tsui et al., 1997; Neuman and Baron, 1998; Cheng et al., 2003; Schaufeli, 2006; Bacharach and Bamberge, 2007; Grégoire and Fisher, 2008; Brown et al., 2009; Gelbrich, 2010; Kang and Gong, 2019; Bi et al., 2021). The questionnaires were pre-tested and evaluated by academics from the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi Mara Puncak Alam, Malaysia, who served as assessors.

B. Survey Method

This study employed a survey in an effort to examine the relationship of the constructs used in this research. This method was chosen due to the advantages of a survey design, which is more economical and encourages rapid turnaround in the data collection period (Matthews and Ross, 2010). Additionally, questionnaires were considered to be appropriate in this context because categorizing the opinions given by the respondent is difficult. This study used a five-point scale for the items where 1 is 'strongly disagree,' and 5 is 'strongly agree.' This five-point scale was chosen because the possible answers are balanced in the directional categories. The measurement scale for verbal abuse was the scale developed by Neuman and Baron (1998) and Kang and Gong (2019), with five items measuring verbal abuse. As a measurement scale for vindictive customers, the scale developed by Grégoire and Fisher (2008) and Gelbrich (2010) with four items measuring vindictive customers. The study used a scale developed by Parker and Decotiis (1983) and Bi et al. (2021) to measure job stress with four items. The scale used to measure real-time employee feedback was adapted from Brown et al. (2009) with four items. Besides that, the measurement scale for employee engagement was the scale developed by Schaufeli (2006) with four items and social support measurement; this study selected the most appropriate items to suit the study setting and adapted the scale

used by Tsui et al. (1997), Cheng et al. (2003), and Bacharach and Bamberge (2007) with nine items.

To choose suitable respondents, the questionnaire included one screening question. The question is, "Have you ever dealt with jay-customer behaviors when delivering food to customers?". The survey was terminated when the respondents chose "No" to the screening question. The data had been collected from a sample of frontline employees working as food delivery riders in Klang Valley using the Google Form and printed questionnaire. The researcher accompanied employees to assist them in answering the question should there be any problems while completing the survey questions. Furthermore, this technique increased the response rate due to the lack of ambiguity in the questions resulting from the researcher's presence.

C. The Study Population

Employees who worked in the food delivery industry in Klang Valley, Malaysia, were chosen to participate in the study. However, the study focused on food delivery employees who have experiences with jay-customer behaviors. In determining the number of respondents, based on the suggested sample size by Kerjcie and Morgan (1970), 384 respondents were sufficient to represent the population statistically. Nevertheless, Hair et al. (2010) argued that a sample size of 300 was sufficient with a study employing seven or less latent constructs. This study used six constructs; therefore, 300 samples were adequate.

The researchers approached the food riders by searching at the restaurant or shopping mall area; the researcher distributed the questionnaire while the rider was having their break time, waiting for the food, or if they were busy, the researcher showed them a QR Code for the link of Google Form. They could answer the survey at home. The data collection began from May until August 2022, which was three months. The researcher managed to obtain 339 questionnaires. After the data cleaning process, only 263 questionnaires were then preceded for data analysis.

D. Data Analysis Technique

This study used two main statistical tools to analyze the data, which include SPSS. For the final analysis, which involves confirmatory analysis and structural model analysis, the study used AMOS to fit structural equation modeling (SEM). The main reason for choosing SEM analysis for this study was that the study had assumed that SEM could solve research problems related to the relationships between the given constructs. Accordingly, SEM was able to test the moderating effects of the variables.

IV. Findings

Table 1 represents the demographics of 263 respondents that participated in the study.

The demographic background of this sample facilitates explaining the analysis process for this study. After carefully examining potential outliers,

the total useable food delivery employees' sample size was 263. In this group of samples, 77.6% were male, and 22.4% were female.

Table 1 shows that respondents from 18 to 27 years of age comprised the largest portion of the sample, 72.6%. Based on the table, most respondents were Malay, representing more than half of the study population, which is 93.9%. Most of the food riders worked as full-time employees, 66.2%. In addition, many riders worked as Grabfood riders 42.6%. Food Panda rider was second-highest, representing 29.7%, while fast food delivery rider had 13.3%. A rider also worked at companies such as Shoppe Food, Lala Move, and many more, representing 14.4%. Based on the results, most respondents would get between RM 1 501 to RM 2 500, which is 30%. Food riders' second highest income was RM 2 501 - RM 3 500, 28.5%. Within the sample, the majority of the employee had Diploma, 37.6%, and the second-highest education level was a bachelor's degree which is 34.2%. In contrast, the remaining employee education level was high school graduate, 25.9%, and only 2.3% had a master's degree.

Table 1. Respondent Profile

Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	204	77.6
Female	59	22.4
Total	263	100
Age		
18 - 27	191	72.6
28 - 37	64	24.3
38 - 47	6	2.3
48 ≥	2	.8
Total	263	100
Race		
Malay	247	93.9
Indian	8	3.0
Chinese	7	2.7
Other	1	.4
Total	263	100
Employment Type		
Full-time	174	66.2
Part-time	86	32.7
Other	3	1.1
Total	263	100

Table 1. Continued

Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Company Name		
GrabFood	112	42.6
FoodPanda	78	29.7
Fast food delivery rider	35	13.3
Other	38	14.4
Total	263	100
Income		
< RM 1 500	68	25.9
RM 1 501 - RM 2 500	79	30.0
RM 2 501 - RM 3 500	75	28.5
RM 3 501 - RM 4 500	31	11.8
RM 4 501 - RM 5 500	9	3.4
> RM 5 501	1	.4
Total	263	100
Education Level		
Doctoral Degree	0	0
Master Degree	6	2.3
Bachelor Degree	90	34.2
Diploma	99	37.6
High School graduate	68	25.9
Total	263	100

Source: Authors' calculations

Table 2. Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
VA	.092	263	<.001	.975	263	<.001
VC	.101	263	<.001	.972	263	<.001
JS	.110	263	<.001	.970	263	<.001
SS	.161	263	<.001	.895	263	<.001
CS	.172	263	<.001	.854	263	<.001
RTEF	.162	263	<.001	.919	263	<.001
EE	.206	263	<.001	.837	263	<.001

Source: Authors' calculations

A. Preliminary Analysis

The employee data were tested using normality plots and histograms and revealed no indication of non-normality. This was later proved by Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, which showed the data was typically distributed, as shown in Table 2. The significant value demonstrates 0.000, and based on the central limit theorem, the data were normally distributed when the sample was larger than 30. The

skewness and kurtosis supported the previous result, indicating that the data were approximately normally distributed, and all values were in an acceptable normality range. Of 270 valid data sets, seven outliers were found and removed, leaving 263 valid cases for further analysis.

B. Multicollinearity

The test for the employee data was conducted using SPSS to identify any multicollinearity problems. Both values showed no evidence of multicollinearity, with a tolerance value of less than 0.10 and a VIF value of above 10. Thus, the multicollinearity assumption was not violated, as shown in Table 3.

C. Measurement Model

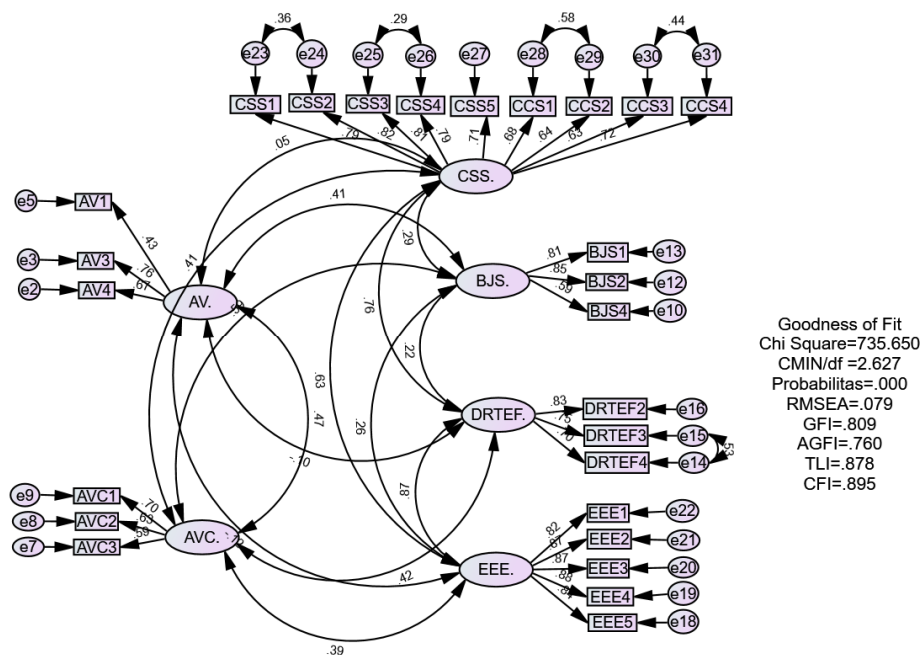
Few steps were taken to estimate the measurement model before the final measurement model was achieved. For this study, the measurement model was constructed by combining seven constructs in a model using AMOS 28.0. The model was tested for its goodness-of-fit using fit statistics. The output of the tested model demonstrated an acceptable fit to the data, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Table 3. Multicollinearity Assumptions

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Collinearity Statistics	
		Tolerance	VIF
EE	AV	.662	1.510
	AVC	.610	1.638
	BJS	.783	1.277
	CSS	.597	1.675
	CCS	.545	1.834
	REF	.587	1.703

Source: Authors' calculations

Note: EE = employee engagement, AV = verbal abuse, AVC = vindictive customer, BJS = job stress
CSS = supervisor support, CCS = co-workers support, REF = real-time employee feedback



Source: Authors' calculations

Figure 2. Measurement Model

The initial estimation showed that the model did not well fit the data. The value of χ^2/df was 3.709, and the RMSEA was 0.102. The other fit indices revealed a poor fit, where GFI = 0.666, AGFI = 0.606, CFI = 0.765, NFI = 0.707, and TLI = 0.740. Further research was done to find potential misfit issues and enhance the model because the fit indices did not fit the data. An examination of the standardized regression weights revealed that several indicators had low loading (BJS3 = 0.262, DRTEF1 = -0.018, AVC4 = 0.391, AV2 = 0.391, and AV5 = 0.397). These items were deleted and removed from further analysis because the loading was below 0.60. Further examination and observation were carried out by investigating other low-loading indicators. The items with low loadings were removed, and the deletion process was accomplished by deleting one item at a time, re-specifying the model, and running the new model. This process is carried out to determine how well the data fits the model (Awang, 2012).

Before deleting any item, the low factor loadings on each item were carefully observed and compared to the model's goodness-of-fit. The estimation revealed that the model still did not fit the data well. The value of χ^2/df was 3.470, and the RMSEA was 0.097. The other fit indices revealed a marginal fit: GFI = 0.725, AGFI = 0.661, CFI = 0.837, NFI = 0.787, and TLI = 0.814. Because the fit indices did not fit the data, further investigation was conducted by looking at the model's modification indices (MI). MI analysis revealed that e_{14} and $e_{15} = 18.479$, e_{23} and $e_{24} = 32.638$, e_{25} and $e_{26} = 28.565$, e_{28} and $e_{29} = 89.359$, e_{30} and $e_{31} = 47.278$, have large modification values covariances. The typical procedure is to draw covariances from the item.

As previously stated, each item was carefully

observed and removed from further estimation due to low factor loading, high error variance, and high MI. Therefore, a new CFA was executed after removing some indicators from the model. The output of the indices for the modified model demonstrated a better fit to the data than the previous model. The final model has illustrated above in Figure 2. Table 4 shows an acceptably good fit index, where the χ^2 per degree of freedom was less than three, and RMSEA was below 0.08, indicating a good fit and in an acceptable range. Meanwhile the CFI value was close to 0.9, which shows a relatively good fit (Bentler, 1990). The other fit indices, NFI and TLI, should be over 0.9 for a good fit (Bentler, 1990), but in this sample, the two indices are a little below the criteria. Based on these indices, this sample has an acceptable fit to the 6-factor model. These results suggest that the model was fit and meets the fundamental requirements.

Table 4 shows that the three fitness categories reached the level of acceptance, including the CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and CMIN/df. Therefore, the study assumed that the model is acceptable and fits the data.

D. Unidimensionality

The unidimensionality was investigated in this study. In this study, all items have achieved the recommended value of at least 0.60 except for three items (AV1, AVC3, and BJS4), where the factor loading is 0.431, 0.587, and 0.591. Additionally, Hair et al. (2010) suggested that a value of 0.30 for factor loading is statistically significant if the sample size is greater than 200. As noted earlier, the sample size for this study was 263; thus, factor loading of

Table 4. Measurement Model Fit Statistic

Measurement Model	χ^2/df	Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	Tucker Lewis Index (TLI)	RMSEA
Initial estimation	3.709	0.765	0.740	0.102
Estimation I	3.470	0.837	0.814	0.097
Final Model	2.627	0.895	0.878	0.079

Source: Authors' calculations

0.431, 0.587, and 0.591 was acceptable, as it indicates a marginal loading. So, this item was kept for further analysis. Therefore, unidimensionality was achieved for all constructs. The study also performed convergent and discriminant validity tests.

E. Composite Reliability

The study also calculated the composite reliability, and as shown in Table 5, all scales demonstrated acceptable composite reliability. All of the construct reliabilities exhibited values greater than 0.60. Therefore, all the constructs used in the study are valid and reliable (Hair et al., 2010).

F. Convergent Validity

The convergent validity was assessed based on the criteria that satisfy the following criteria (1) all of the items being significant and (2) the AVE being at least 0.50 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). All parameters had acceptable factor loadings and were significantly different from zero. The AVE values were also within the recommended range, except for the verbal abuse and vindictive customer scales, for which the AVE values were 0.403 and 0.412. Although the AVE for verbal abuse and vindictive customer was below 0.50, all of the construct reliabilities exhibited values above 0.60; thus, it was significant in representing the construct. Furthermore, an excerpt from the article

by Huang et al. (2013) states, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is higher than 0.5, but we can accept 0.4. All factor loadings were generally significant, with the standardized estimates of each item greater than 0.60 and the $AVE \geq 0.50$; therefore, convergent validity was established.

G. Discriminant Validity

The discriminant validity was ascertained by investigating the correlation of each construct, and almost all correlations in this study have values less than 0.85, except for the correlations between job stress and social support, which have values of 0.937. As a result, because each construct displayed a low correlation with the other constructs, it can be concluded that each measure assessed distinct and different concepts; hence, the discriminant validity is satisfactory. Table 6 shows the correlations between each construct with a value less than 0.85. In addition, Henseler et al. (2015), who created a further discriminant validity criterion, recommend the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) criterion, as shown in Table 7. This criterion accepts values less than 0.90 and is essentially a correlation estimate between two variables (Gold et al., 2001). Furthermore, the HTMT assessment results show that there is sufficient discriminant validity which is all values were below 0.90. According to Henseler et al. (2015), discriminant validity is established if the HTMT is clearly less than one. In a nutshell, the measurement

Table 5. Composite Reliability of Constructs

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Construct Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
A: Jay-customer Behaviors			
Verbal Abuse (AV)	0.637	0.658	0.403
Vindictive Customer (AVC)	0.673	0.677	0.412
B: Job Stress (BJS)	0.791	0.799	0.576
C: Social Support	0.916	0.913	0.540
D: Real-Time Employee Feedback (DRTEF)	0.848	0.806	0.583
E: Employee Engagement (EEE)	0.929	0.933	0.735

Source: Authors' calculations

Table 6. Correlations among constructs

		VA	VC	JS	RTEF	EE	SS
VA	Pearson Correlation	1	.543**	.206**	.235**	.073	.185**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001	.237	.003
	N	263	263	263	263	263	263
VC	Pearson Correlation	.543**	1	.217**	.262**	.181**	.244**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001	<.001	.003	<.001
	N	263	263	263	263	263	263
JS	Pearson Correlation	.206**	.217**	1	.528**	.512**	.937**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	263	263	263	263	263	263
RTEF	Pearson Correlation	.235**	.262**	.528**	1	.598**	.612**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001
	N	263	263	263	263	263	263
EE	Pearson Correlation	.073	.181**	.512**	.598**	1	.589**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.237	.003	<.001	<.001		<.001
	N	263	263	263	263	263	263
SS	Pearson Correlation	.185**	.244**	.937**	.612**	.589**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	
	N	263	263	263	263	263	263

Source: Authors' calculations

Table 7. Discriminant Validity: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio Statistics (HTMT)

	VA	VC	JS	SS	RTEF	EE
VA						
VC	0.468					
JS	0.410	0.609				
SS	0.013	0.427	0.293			
RTEF	-0.088	0.419	0.240	0.752		
EE	-0.145	0.382	0.302	0.646	0.819	

Note: VA = Verbal Abuse; VC = Vindictive Customer; JS = Job Stress; SS = Social Support; RTEF = Real-time Employee Feedback; EE = Employee Engagement
Source: Authors' calculations

model showed adequate construct validity.

H. Hypotheses Testing

Six hypotheses were developed and tested to support the goals of this study, and the results found that one hypothesis was not supported while five were supported. The final structural model in Figure

3 shows the relationships between the measured variables.

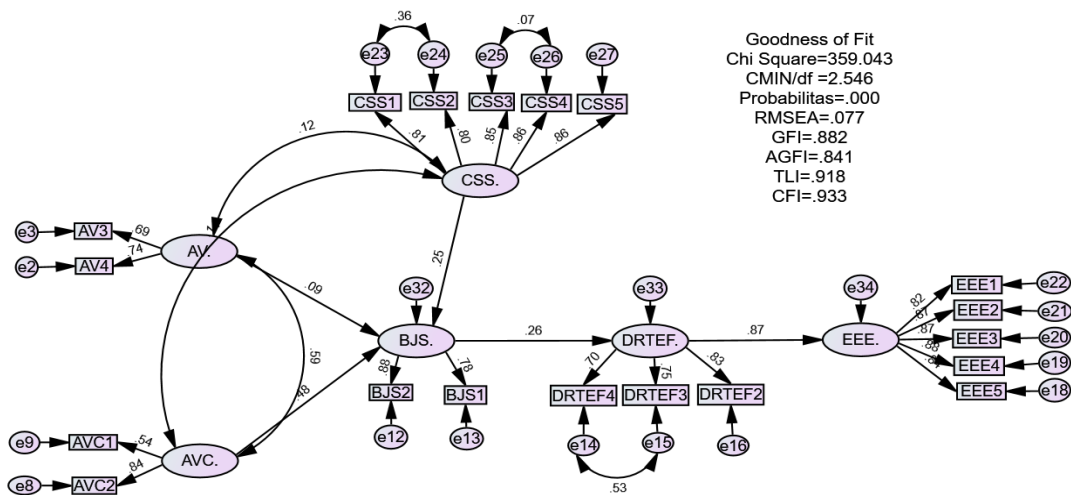
A structural equation model generated through AMOS was used to test the relationships. A good-fitting model was accepted if the value of the CMIN/df is < 5, the goodness-of-fit (GFI) indices (Hair et al., 2010); the Tucker and Lewis (1973) index (TLI); the Confirmatory fit index (CFI) (Bentler, 1990) is > 0.90 (Hair et al., 2010). In addition, the

root mean square error approximation (RMSEA) is between 0.05 and 0.08 (Hair et al., 2010). The fit indices for the model shown in Table 8 fell within the acceptable range: CMIN/df = 2.546, the goodness-of-fit (GFI) = 0.882, TLI = 0.918, CFI = 0.933, RMSEA = 0.077.

The study assessed the impact of a customer's verbal abuse and vindictive customer on employees' job stress. The impact of customer verbal abuse on employees' job stress was positive but insignificant ($\beta = 0.087$, $t = 0.781$, $p = 0.435$); hence, H1 was not supported. The impact of customer vindictive customers on employees' job stress was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.477$, $t = 3.595$, $p > 0.005$), supporting H2. Furthermore, the study assessed the impact of

employee job stress on the use of real-time employee feedback. The result was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.260$, $t = 3.487$, $p > 0.005$); therefore, H3 was supported. Moreover, the study also evaluated the impact of real-time employee feedback on employee engagement. The result was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.874$, $t = 10.460$, $p > 0.005$), supporting H4. Model fit indices and hypotheses results are presented in Table 9.

The study assessed the moderating role of social support on the relationship between verbal abuse and job stress. The results revealed a positive and insignificant moderating impact of social support on the relationship between verbal abuse and job stress ($\beta = 0.092$, $t = 1.564$, $p = 0.118$), not supporting



Source: Authors' calculations

Note: AV = verbal abuse, AVC = vindictive customer, BJS = job stress, DRTEF = real-time employee feedback
EEE = employee engagement, CSS = social support

Figure 3. Final Structural Model

Table 8. Verbal Abuse and Vindictive Customer Moderation Analysis Summary

Hypotheses	Relationship	β	t	p	Results
H5	BJS <-- AV	0.374	6.326	***	Not Supported
	BJS <-- CSS	0.040	0.677	0.498	
	BJS <-- AV*CSS	0.092	1.564	0.118	
H6	BJS <-- AVC	0.473	8.161	***	Supported
	BJS <-- CSS	0.011	0.191	0.849	
	BJS <-- AVC*CSS	0.142	2.491	0.013	

H5. Also, the study analyzed the moderating role of social support on the relationship between vindictive customers and job stress. The results revealed a positive and significant moderating impact of social support on the relationship between vindictive customers and job stress ($\beta = 0.142$, $t = 2.491$, $p = 0.013$), supporting H6. Hypotheses results are presented in Table 9.

Further, the results of simple slope analysis conducted to understand better the moderating effects' nature are shown in Figures 4 and 5. As seen in Figures 4 and 5, the line is much steeper for high social support; this indicates that at higher social

support, the impact of verbal abuse and vindictive customer on job stress is much stronger than for low social support. However, at lower social support, the line tends to straighten; this shows that at the low level of social support, the increase in verbal abuse and the vindictive customer does not lead to similar job stress changes. In conclusion, high social support weakens the impact of verbal abuse and vindictive customer on job stress. As a result, social support strengthens the positive relationship between verbal abuse, vindictive customer, and job stress.

Table 9 summarizes the results of the model fit indices and hypotheses results, and it was found that

Table 9. Summary of hypotheses testing

Hypotheses	Standardized Estimates	t - value	p-value	Supported/Not Supported
Hypothesis 1: A customer's verbal abuse positively influences employees' job stress.	0.087	0.781	0.435	Not supported
Hypothesis 2: A customer's vindictive customer positively influences frontline employees' job stress	0.477	3.595	0.000	Supported
Hypothesis 3: Employee job stress positively influences the used of real-time feedback.	0.260	3.487	0.000	Supported
Hypothesis 4: The used of real-time employee feedback positively influences employee engagement.	0.874	10.460	0.000	Supported
Hypothesis 5: Social support moderates the impact of a customer's verbal abuse on frontline employees' job stress.	0.092	1.564	0.118	Not supported
Hypothesis 6: Social support moderates the impact of a customer's vindictive customer on frontline employees' job stress.	0.142	2.491	0.013	Supported

Source: Authors' calculations

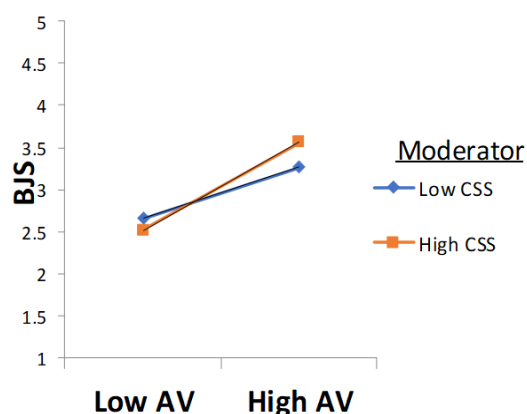


Figure 4. Simple Slope Tests of Verbal Abuse

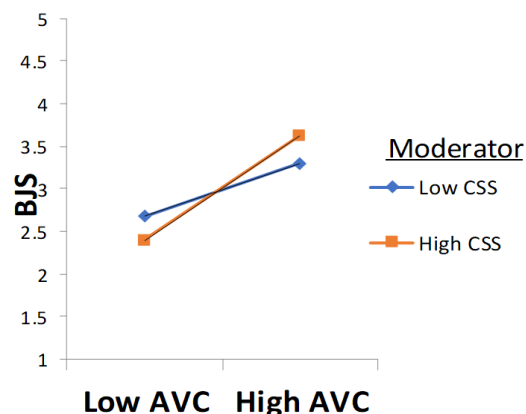


Figure 5. Simple Slope Tests of Vindictive Customer

hypotheses 2, 3, 4, and 6 were positive and significant, while hypotheses 1 and 5 were positive and insignificant.

The results show the standardized estimates, t - value, and p-value for each tested hypothesis. The significant and supported hypotheses displayed a p-value of less than 0.05, while the standardized estimates value range from 0.087 to 0.874, indicating that the variables are positively correlated.

V. Discussion

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of jay-customer behaviors on employees' job stress. In a food delivery setting, jay-customer behavior plays a crucial role in inducing employee job stress. To develop a sustainable food and beverage industry, addressing the ethical issues of employee management in the workplace is critical.

A study found a positive and insignificant relationship between customer verbal abuse and job stress experienced by employees, which contradicted the proposed assumption in Hypothesis 1. The findings were not similar to Bi et al. (2021) and Gong et al. (2018), customers' verbal abuse significantly affected frontline employees' job burnout. The study setting also plays an important role, such as the Bi et al. (2021) setting in Korea and the Gong et al. (2018) setting in China, as different cultures, attitudes, and behaviors brought different results. Besides that, a rider was threatened by the customer with a lower rating of service and allegedly took out a piping hot bowl of soup and tossed it at the rider because the restaurant's kitchen was backed up and meals took longer to be prepared (Tan, 2021; Hassan, 2021).

According to the researcher's insights, employee resilience prevents verbal abuse from affecting job stress. The people who delivered food were resilient and able to overcome challenges. Therefore, more resilient workers could better handle verbal abuse from customers. In addition to employee resiliency,

employees who deliver food could feel more control over the situation because they are not in direct contact with the consumer and can leave after delivering the food. The impact of verbal abuse may also be lessened compared to longer interactions at restaurants or hotels because they can only interact with customers momentarily.

Moreover, the results confirmed the positive relationship between vindictive customers and employee job stress, which means that job stress increases when employees experience more vindictive customers. Hypothesis 2, therefore, was supported. Based on these results of hypothesis 2, the result has been able to provide a new finding that might contribute to the recent jay-customer behaviors literature, which is the vindictive customer. The findings appear to support Harris and Reynolds's (2004) argument in which they reveal 30% of frontline employee informants reported being victims of vindictive behavior by customers.

Besides that, according to Sweiss et al. (2022), 76% of respondents said they had experienced negative word of mouth, 70.7 per cent said they had witnessed vindictive complaining, and 82 per cent said they had witnessed negative publicity. Both studies differed from the current study as Harris and Reynolds (2004) studied restaurants, hotels, and bars employees' and Sweiss et al. (2022) studied the telecommunication sector. Complementing and extending past research documenting the jay-customer behaviors, vindictive customers from restaurants, hotels, bars, and the telecommunication sector, the present study advances prior work by exploring how vindictive customers influence employees' job stress in the food delivery sector.

Employees may find it difficult to deal with customers, especially if they come across vindictive customers. According to the researcher's insights, vindictive customers benefit employees' job stress by deliberately trying to make things tough for them by being rude or making excessive requests because their expectations were not met. They could lash out, threaten legal action, leave bad reviews, or do other unpleasant actions in retaliation. Stressed-out employees

are more likely to be absent from work, feel less satisfied with their jobs, and suffer from health issues, including insomnia, depression, and anxiety.

Overall, food delivery companies must take action to mitigate the negative effects of vindictive customers on employees' job stress. To address this issue, companies must establish training and support programs for employees to assist them to handle and cope with difficult customers. This issue in the food delivery sector can only be addressed and decreased with good training and a friendly work environment. Employees will feel more valued and engaged with their job. As a result, training and support programs increased employee productivity and provided a better experience for everyone involved.

Additionally, the results showed that employee job stress positively influences the use of real-time employee feedback. In other words, increased employee job stress leads to the use of real-time employee feedback. Thus, the results provide support for hypothesis 3. Employees in service industries such as restaurants, hotels, and casinos are susceptible to job stress since they must interact with customers (Bi et al., 2021; Chung et al., 2021). The present study also revealed that when food delivery riders encounter vindictive customers, they feel stressed. This finding is consistent with Bi et al. (2021) argument in which they claimed that jay-customer behaviors are most likely to raise job stress.

Based on this study, employees stressed during work were influenced to use real-time employee feedback from their supervisors to solve the problem. Indirectly, the use of real-time feedback can reduce or overcome employees' job stress caused by jay-customer behaviors. Real-time feedback is essential because it gives a snapshot view of the team's pains and sentiments. Everyone gets a chance to voice their concerns and make their feelings known regularly. This finding is consistent with Cohen (2015) argument, in which they claimed a real-time feedback system helps trainees perform better in demanding circumstances. As in the present study, the demanding circumstances were during the employee's experience with the jay-customer behaviors. They can immediately

use real-time feedback to overcome their stress by telling their problem or situation to their co-workers or supervisors. As for this study, most respondents agreed that using real-time feedback can reduce their job stress caused by jay-customer behaviors and be useful for quality improvement.

Next, the results confirmed the positive relationship between real-time employee feedback and employee engagement, which means that when employees used more real-time employee feedback, more employee engagement, Hypothesis 4, therefore, was supported. In accordance with Deal et al. (2010), regular feedback and guidance offered to employees by their managers is essential for sustaining high employee engagement. According to Jones et al. (2019) to achieve better employee engagement during challenging times, and to achieve higher results in the business, the leaders can request employee feedback, which asks employees to share information freely, both in frustration and in ideas for improvements in productive ways.

Based on the findings, most respondents agreed that they feel bursting with energy, are mentally prepared, always persevere, are enthusiastic, and completely focused on their work after they fill in real-time employee feedback. It could be said that giving instant feedback during their work relieved them and reduced the stress caused by jay-customer behaviors. Communication between leaders and employees requires openness, transparency, and respect to improve employee engagement (Hart, 2016). This insight is vital to an organization. It is because they can take appropriate action if other employees exhibit similar issues with jay-customer behaviors in the future.

A. The Moderating Role of Social Support

Another crucial finding for this study is related to the moderating role of social support to jay-customer behaviors, which is verbal abuse and vindictive customer and employee job stress. The results failed to confirm that social support moderates the impact of a customer's verbal abuse on frontline

employees' job stress. Hypothesis 5, therefore, was not supported. Verbally abused employees may feel devalued and disrespected, decreasing job satisfaction and productivity. According to the researcher's insights, social support does not significantly impact a customer's verbal abuse towards employees' job stress in the food delivery setting since social support may not be readily available to employees working in the food delivery setting. Many employees work long hours with few breaks, leaving little time for socializing outside the workplace. Furthermore, because of the nature of their profession, they may not have regular interaction with co-workers or supervisors. Although social support might help reduce job stress, it may not always help employees who face verbal abuse from customers

Furthermore, the results confirmed that social support moderates the impact of vindictive customers on frontline employees' job stress. Hypothesis 6, therefore, was supported. As mentioned in the literature review, several studies have been conducted on the relationship between social support, job stress, and jay-customer behaviors (Yousaf et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2019; Geldart et al., 2018). The findings are also consistent with other empirical studies, which have found the moderating effect of social support on the negative impact of occupational stress (Yousaf et al., 2019; Aqeel et al., 2021). Other than that, present results confirmed that social support moderates the impact of jay-customer behavior on frontline employees' job stress. This study found that good supervisory support for frontline personnel can mitigate the negative impact of customer incivility on job burnout.

Given customers' high standards and expectations, working in the food delivery sector can be difficult. Employees may feel exhausted and under stress while dealing with vindictive customers. Nevertheless, social support can considerably mitigate the negative effects of customer vindictiveness on employees' work stress. According to the researcher's viewpoint, a vindictive customer displays their dissatisfaction in a combative and violent way. Multiple circumstances, including faulty orders or delayed deliveries, might

cause this behavior.

The findings were consistent with the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989). This theory implies that individuals under stress attempt to protect the loss or threatened resources to regain resources from others. On the basis of the findings of this study, the researcher explained that jay-customer behaviors result in more job stress. Employees may seek to gain support from other sources, such as their supervisors or co-workers, to deal with this situation.

B. Theoretical Contributions

The findings offer several meaningful theoretical contributions to the literature on the impact of jay-customer behaviors on food rider job stress, moderating social support, real-time employee feedback usage, and employee engagement. This study, therefore, brings together bodies of literature, which it then presented from the food delivery perspective. The contributions of this study relate to the confirmation of the previous research and provide theoretical suggestions in the job stress and social support domain. About the conservation of resources (COR) theory, this research added support to Halbesleben et al. (2014) and Hobfoll et al. (2018) conceptualization and studies which theories for describing human stress and well-being. According to Hobfoll (1989), COR theory predicts that people with more resources (more supportive colleagues) are less prone to stress. In comparison, those with fewer resources (less supportive colleagues) are more vulnerable to stress. The function of social support in mitigating the negative impacts of job stress and jay-customer behaviors can also be interpreted via the perspective of COR theory.

Finally, an added contribution of this research is that this study may be one of the first to investigate the impact of jay-customer behaviors on food rider job stress, the moderating of social support, real-time employee feedback usage, and employee engagement in the context of the food delivery industry in a

Malaysia. In doing so, this research has also contributed to the expansion of the field of food delivery services. Most research concerning jay-customer behaviors has focused on restaurants, hotels, retail stores, and banks; however, this study has successfully provided findings from food rider perspectives with all the used constructs.

VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, jay-customer behaviors toward frontline employees, such as food delivery industry food riders, increase employees' job stress. Therefore, controlling and preventing jay-customer behaviors and eliminating stressful factors are conducive to reducing stress-induced work situations and creating a healthy work environment, improving frontline employees' productivity, quality, and morale, and increasing good employee engagement in the food delivery industry. This study contributed to the body of knowledge in various aspects, particularly that of service personnel. It is also critical that this study contributed to practitioners' understanding of the impact of employee roles and engagement on the overall service environment. Also, this study provides vital insights into the need to establish a holistic, sustainable workplace by controlling and supporting employee mental health and wellness by addressing the sources of stress, such as jay-customer behaviors. More importantly, the model proposed in this study should serve as a foundation and guideline for future research in jay-customer behavior and food delivery services.

Managers and supervisors of food delivery companies should recognize the existence of jay-customer behaviors and acknowledge their major impact on employees' job stress, which will eventually damage employee emotions and customers' satisfaction in the long term. As a result, managers and supervisors must take precautions to protect their personnel from jay-customer misbehavior by compiling a list of

regular jay-customers so that it would be useful to other food riders in identifying problematic customers.

VII. Limitations and Future Research

The study only focused on the food delivery sector; therefore, this study suggests that future studies should cover wide areas of the service industry. It is because jay-customer behaviors are known not only within the food delivery sector, future studies could replicate similar investigations in other service organizations such as hotels, restaurants, airlines, banks, and hospitals in the Malaysian context. Also, the study lacks diversity in terms of the sample used. The survey concentrates on the urban area (focusing only on the Klang Valley), which does not represent the whole of Malaysia.

In terms of research design, the study used only quantitative methods; however, using a mixed-method approach could have a greater impact on the study's findings. Finally, this study has highlighted social support on weakening the negative effect of employee job stress and jay-customer behaviors in the food delivery sector. Even though social support used in this study focused on support by supervisors and co-workers who directly related to the food delivery employees, it is necessary to expand to social support from their family and friends. Future researchers can explore the role of family and friends' support in weakening the effect of employee job stress in the food delivery industry and relevant industries.

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