

MODERATING EFFECT OF AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT ON THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONALITY TRAITS,
JOB SATISFACTION AND CUSTOMER-ORIENTED
BEHAVIOR AMONG NURSES

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To my beloved family and friends

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ABSTRACT

Rapid growth of the healthcare industry and existence of a more educated population have resulted in higher demand and expectation of the nursing care services. Healthcare providers need to meet the demand and expectation by introducing customer-oriented behavior among nurses. Previous studies on customer-oriented behavior have been inconclusive and almost non-existence in Malaysian public hospitals. Therefore, this study examined the relationship between personality traits, job satisfaction and customer-oriented behavior and the moderating effect of affective commitment on these relationships. Trait theory, affective theory of social exchange and self-determination theory were used to explain the study's framework. The population of this study were nurses from Kuala Lumpur Hospital, Sultanah Aminah Hospital and Pulau Pinang Hospital. Data was from 361 usable self-administrated questionnaires, and were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for descriptive analysis and hierarchical multiple regression. The findings revealed that the level of nurses' customer-oriented behavior was generally high with a mean of 4.23. There were significant differences in the level of customer-oriented behavior based on gender and age groups of the nurses. Multiple regression analysis showed that customer-oriented behavior was significantly and positively related to openness to experience, extraversion, agreeableness and job satisfaction. Affective commitment was found to be a quasi moderator which had a dual role of direct and interaction effects on customer-oriented behavior. The findings can assist healthcare service providers use the personality traits and demographic factors as the basis to identify nurses' customer-oriented behavior during recruitment process. Additionally, the providers can initiate programs that motivate nurses in sharing new ideas to generate a cohesive nursing workforce with job satisfaction and high commitment in exhibiting customer-oriented behavior. Policy makers can include customer-oriented behavior in the key performance indicator (KPI) during performance appraisal. Several directions were also drawn for future studies such as conducting a comparative study of nurses' customer-oriented behavior in other healthcare centers that are equally important such as public clinics, community clinics and dental clinics or other public service sectors.

ABSTRAK

Pertumbuhan yang pesat dalam industri penjagaan kesihatan dan kewujudan populasi yang berpendidikan tinggi telah menyebabkan permintaan dan harapan perkhidmatan penjagaan kejururawatan yang tinggi. Pembekal penjagaan kesihatan perlu memenuhi permintaan dan harapan dengan memperkenalkan tingkah laku berorientasikan pelanggan dalam kalangan jururawat. Kajian terdahulu terhadap tingkah laku berorientasikan pelanggan menunjukkan hasil yang tidak muktamad dan hampir tidak wujud di hospital awam Malaysia. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji hubungan antara sifat-sifat personaliti, kepuasan kerja dan tingkah laku berorientasikan pelanggan serta kesan penyederhanaan komitmen afektif ke atas hubungan ini. Teori sifat, teori afektif pertukaran social dan teori penentuan nasib sendiri digunakan untuk menerangkan rangka kerja kajian. Populasi kajian ini terdiri daripada jururawat di Hospital Kuala Lumpur, Hospital Sultanah Aminah dan Hospital Pulau Pinang. Data diperolehi daripada 361 soal selidik tadbir sendiri yang boleh digunapakai dan dianalisis menggunakan *Statistical Package for Social Sciences* (SPSS) bagi analisis perihalan dan hierarki regresi berganda. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa tahap tingkah laku jururawat berorientasikan pelanggan adalah secara umumnya tinggi dengan min 4.23. Terdapat perbezaan signifikan pada tahap tingkah laku berorientasikan pelanggan mengikut jantina dan kumpulan umur jururawat. Analisis regresi berganda menunjukkan hubungan positif yang signifikan antara tingkah laku berorientasikan pelanggan dengan sifat keterbukaan kepada pengalaman, ekstroversi, sifat menyenangkan dan kepuasan kerja. Komitmen afektif didapati bertindak sebagai penyederhana kuasi yang mempunyai dua peranan, iaitu kesan langsung dan interaksi pada tingkah laku berorientasikan pelanggan. Dapatan ini dapat membantu pengusaha perkhidmatan penjagaan kesihatan menggunakan sifat-sifat personaliti dan faktor-faktor demografi sebagai asas untuk mengenalpasti tingkah laku berorientasikan pelanggan ke atas calon jururawat semasa proses pengambilan pekerja. Di samping itu, pengusaha penjagaan kesihatan juga boleh memulakan program yang dapat memotivasikan jururawat untuk berkongsi idea baharu bagi menjana tenaga kerja jururawat yang padu dengan kepuasan kerja dan komitmen tinggi dalam mempamerkan tingkah laku berorientasikan pelanggan. Para pembuat dasar boleh memasukkan tingkah laku berorientasikan pelanggan dalam petunjuk prestasi utama (KPI) semasa penilaian prestasi. Beberapa panduan juga disediakan untuk kajian masa depan seperti menjalankan perbandingan tingkah laku berorientasikan pelanggan jururawat di pusat penjagaan kesihatan yang lain yang sama penting seperti klinik kesihatan, klinik desa dan klinik pergigian atau sektor perkhidmatan awam yang lain.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

10MP	-	10 th Malaysia Plan
AC	-	Affective Commitment
BFI	-	Big Five Inventory
CC	-	Continuance Commitment
COB	-	Customer-oriented Behavior
COS	-	Customer Orientation Surface Traits
CPA	-	Certified Public Accounting
DV	-	Dependent Variables
FFM	-	Five Factor Model
HKL	-	Hospital Kuala Lumpur
HPP	-	Hospital Pulau Pinang
HSA	-	Hospital Sultanah Aminah
IV	-	Independent Variables
KMO	-	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
MOH	-	Ministry of Health
MP	-	Malaysia Plan
MSQH	-	Malaysia Society for Quality in Health
NC	-	Normative Commitment
OCB	-	Organizational Citizenship Behavior
OCEAN	-	Openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism
OCQ	-	Organizational Commitment Questionnaire
PCA	-	Principal Component Analysis
PIED	-	Perceived Investment in Employees' Development

POS	-	Perceived Organizational Support
QAP	-	Quality Assurance Programme
SDT	-	Self-Determination Theory
SME	-	Small to Medium Sized Enterprises
SOCO	-	Selling Orientation / Customer Orientation
VIF	-	Variation Inflation Factor
WHO	-	World Health Organization

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In today's competitive world, organizations had recognized that customers were the core to the success of their business. This is because industry researchers had proven that every business's success depends greatly on the effectiveness of such organization in managing its relationships positively with current and potential customers (Narver and Slater, 1990; Berry, 2001; Desmarais, 2007; Yoon, Choi and Park, 2007). With this in mind, most organizations had integrated the customer orientation approach in their organization and management teams as well as employees (Narver and Slater, 1990; Kelly, 1992; Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Dean, 2007; Rafaeli, Ziklik and Doucet, 2008).

Efforts in understanding how employees could effectively establish and maintain long term positive relationships with their customers have led researchers to study and understand the term "Customer Orientation". Customer orientation concept was developed from the studies related to market orientation and being a subset of market orientation (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993). Customer orientation was a concept and belief that always put the customer's interest as first priority and it

embraced owners, managers and employees to create a profitable business for long term (Deshpande, Farley and Webster, 1993). Meanwhile, the term customer-oriented behavior refers to particular behaviors exhibited by an individual during the interaction with his or her customers which would lead to customer satisfaction (Farrell, Souchon and Furden, 2001). Customer-oriented behavior was an important approach by the organization in order to achieve higher quality service (Peccei and Rosenthal, 2001). Many researchers had emphasized the critical importance of customer-oriented behavior on frontline employees to deliver quality service and satisfying customers from different global perspectives (Narver and Slater, 1990; Brown, Mowen, Donovan and Licata, 2002; Chen and Chen, 2010). In addition, Lanjananda and Patterson (2009) and Johari and Ong (2013) emphasized that customer-oriented behavior also important in healthcare section in order to deliver higher level of nursing care.

According to Peccei and Rosenthal (2001) customer-oriented behavior was an important approach to achieve higher quality of service in healthcare organization. This was in line with Hartline, Maxham and McKee's (2000) description that customer orientation was an impression and belief that emphasizes on customers or patients interest regardless on the enterprise profitability. Hartline *et al.* (2000) also related customer orientation concept as achieving patient's needs and expectations in the healthcare organizations. In today's world, healthcare industry is facing an increasing expectation especially in the nursing care services where patients look for abroad medical facilities with well-trained and experience physicians as well as hospitals that provided high quality services (Hartline *et al.*, 2000). In line with the stated challenges in the healthcare organization, one of the measures to improve service quality of healthcare was to transform the healthcare system into customer orientation approach in their organization (Peccei and Rosenthal, 2001). Thus, the focus of this study is on the customer-oriented behavior among nurses in the Malaysian public hospitals.

In addition, a study conducted by Hoffman and Ingram (1991) shown that job satisfaction was one of the emotional, affective or attitudinal responses of frontline employees. As an attitude or emotional response, job satisfaction was summarized in

the evaluative component and composed of cognitive, affective, behavioral components. Evident shows that job satisfaction was vital to customer-oriented behavior in ensuring customer satisfaction (Hoffman and Ingram, 1992; Babakus, and Mangold, 1992; Pettijohn *et al.*, 2002; Gil *et al.*, 2005; Gounaris, 2008; Mechinda and Patterson, 2011). It was also noted that several literatures in the other parts of the globe focused on the relationship of job satisfaction and customer-oriented behaviour (Hoffman and Ingram, 1992; Pettijohn *et al.*, 2002; Donovan *et al.*, 2004; Gil *et al.*, 2005; Yoon, Choi and Park, 2007; Rehman, 2009). The past researchers concluded that there was a clear relationship between job satisfaction and customer-oriented behavior. Therefore, the intention of this study is to examine the relationship between job satisfaction and customer-oriented behavior of nurses in the Malaysian context.

In addition, basic personality traits were found to predict and explain human behavior at work (Barrick and Mount, 1991; Brown *et al.*, 2002 and Barrick and Mount, 2005). It was important to understand that how personality traits can influence or predict customer-oriented behavior. The personality trait theories had sought to identify and described the underlying traits that explain people's behavior (Allport, 1961). John, Robin and Pervin (2008) agreed with this view since they found out personality traits explain a lot about an individual. Previous researches had used personality traits which represent the innate characteristic of individual as predictors to determine customer-oriented behavior and found that personality traits had significant relationship with customer-oriented behavior (Caldwell and Burger, 1998; Watrous, 2010; Mechinda and Patterson, 2011; Johari and Ong, 2013). In another study by Lanjananda and Patterson (2009), it was stated that basic personality and customer orientation surface trait had greatest effect on customer-oriented behavior. As a result, the previous researchers were concluded that there was a clear relationship between personality traits and customer-oriented behavior. Therefore, this study also examined the relationship between personality traits and customer-oriented behavior of nurses in the Malaysian context.

It was a normal practice for every organization to recruit committed employees. The employee was more likely to be customer-oriented if the employee's

level of commitment and involvement in the organizational was high (Williams and Sanchew, 1998). In general, organizational commitment refers to an individual's feelings about the organization as a whole and was defined by Meyer and Allen (1997, p.67) as "a psychological state that characterized the employee's relationships with the organization and it has implications for the decision to continue membership in organization". Researchers such as Donavan, Brown and Mowen (2004) and Oyenyi (2013) mentioned that customer orientation positively influences an employee's job satisfaction and commitment as employees spend more time in contact with customers. However, some studies had used affective commitment as a single measure of organizational commitment (Lee and Bruvold, 2003; Feather and Rauter, 2004; Hawass, 2012), to relate to the person's emotional attachment to his or her occupation. Meyer and Allen (1997) found that affective commitment had strong positive correlation with desirable outcomes and organizations tend to foster affective commitment among their employees (Meyer and Allen, 1997). In addition, Rivkin, Diestel and Schmidt (2015) claimed that affective commitment had a potential buffering moderator and magnify the immediate impact on human behavior. Therefore, this study took a step further by examining the moderating effect of affective commitment on the relationship between personality traits, job satisfaction and customer-oriented behavior.

1.2 Background of the Study

Healthcare was an action by a person to prevent and to take necessary medical procedures to improve a person's well-being. The healthcare process included diagnosis, treatment, prevention of disease, illness, injury and other impairments in a person and the services were typically offered through a healthcare system. According to Youssef *et al.* (1996), every healthcare provider can provide similar types of service, but the standard of services provided was not the same. The standard of services can therefore be used as a strategy to differentiate the healthcare provider from one to another and can be a key ingredient in the success of services organization (Suki *et al.*, 2011). Standard of care in healthcare setting was elusive

and distinctive; it's totally different from manufactured goods quality where the judgment was based on the physical view of the goods whether good or bad. According to Lim and Tang (2000), there were several perspectives in defining healthcare standard; the technical perspectives included the ability of a product or equipment in terms of its features and characteristics in fulfilling customer needs. Comparatively the functional perspectives included the ability of healthcare provider to satisfy the customers' expectation and needs.

To achieve excellent healthcare standard, the healthcare provider must achieve zero defect and retain every customers as well as carry out continuous efforts in improving the standard of the delivery system. The healthcare industry today was facing increasing expectations on the nursing care from the patients. Since, patients nowadays were more aware of other alternatives, rising standards of healthcare, and viewing the delivery of healthcare from different angles and perspectives (Lim and Tang, 2000). With these various demands and expectations, healthcare providers must compete among themselves to ensure customers satisfaction and long term profitability by increasing the elements of excellent delivery and services and effectiveness of the medical treatment equipment (Friedenberg, 1997).

Owing to the highly competitive healthcare market today, healthcare providers had begun to realize that ensuring customer satisfaction was a key element in their marketing strategy and a crucial determinant of long-term viability and success (Andaleeb, 1998). The healthcare industry today was facing with increasing expectations especially in the nursing care services where patients view quality healthcare from different angles and perspectives. Patients were focusing on the services delivered by the healthcare provider as well as the technical outcome of the service (Angelopoulou, Kangis and Babis, 1998). Customer perceptions of service quality also play an important role when the patients intend to choose a hospital (Lim and Tang, 2000). With the pressure of competition and the increasing necessity to deliver to the satisfaction of patients, the elements of quality control, quality service and effectiveness of medical treatment had become vital for healthcare providers (Friedenberg, 1997). As a result, many countries like Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand had started to establish healthcare accreditation program for healthcare

providers to elevate the level of their delivery standard (Friedenberg, 1997). This program aims to encourage the healthcare providers to improve the standard of nursing care in the hospital and at the same time allowed independent agencies to assess their performance.

In Malaysia, the government had started to emphasize on the standard of healthcare services by introducing new and comprehensive approach of “Quality Healthcare and Active Healthy Lifestyle” to transform Malaysia into a high income nation by 2020 as stated in the 10th Malaysia Plan (10MP) (Market Watch, 2012). Additionally, the government had established various strategies to improve the healthcare service quality. One of the strategies was the implementation of Quality Assurance Programme (QAP) which aims to enhance the Malaysian healthcare system and to provide better quality services (Phoon, 2009). Furthermore, the Ministry of Health Malaysia also introduced a symptomatic program known as “KONSEP 7S (CONCEPT 7S)” a soft skill and behavioral change program to improve the standard of care and nurses image. The 7S refers to “*Senyum, Salam, Segera, Sentuh, Sensitif, Sopan and Segak*”. Basically, it aims to create a group of nurses with caring image, moral values and customer-friendly.

In view of the high demand in nursing care standard and the complaints from the patients, one of the measures to improve nursing care was to transform the healthcare system into a customer-oriented management style which focuses on nurses’ customer-oriented behavior (Chien, Chou and Hung, 2008). In this context, customer-oriented behavior which conceptualized from customer orientation refers to assisting healthcare organizations to meet its patients’ needs in the area of nursing care. Additionally, focusing on customer-oriented behavior would help healthcare providers to fulfill customer needs in order to attain sustainable and excellence customer satisfaction as suggested by Chun, Hsin and Shuo (2008). Nurses who exhibited customer-oriented behavior and put patients’ interest on top of the hospital’s operation would improve the customer satisfaction level (Hasin, Seeluangsawat and Shareef, 2001). As a result, healthcare providers can save money by reducing the amount of resources spent to resolve customer complaints (Pakdil and Harwood, 2005). In this context, customer-oriented behavior would certainly

make a difference and betterment in terms of elevating standard of care and improving patient overall experience in the hospitals.

1.3 Problem Statement

The expectation on the nursing care services from the patients towards healthcare organizations had been increasing nowadays. Thus, the healthcare providers competed with one another to provide the best healthcare services to the patients (Suki, Chiam, Suki, 2011). In Malaysia, the government had implemented the Quality Assurance Programme (QAP) and introduced a symptomatic KONSEP 7S soft skill in order to improve the standard of care. Unfortunately, according to the Public Complaints Bureau (2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015), Ministry of Health was identified as the top three government agencies with the highest complaints received against other Ministries in year 2012 until 2015. The Public Complaints Bureau had received a total of 583 complaints from the public in year 2012, 480 complaints in year 2013, 368 complaints in year 2014 and 401 complaints in year 2015. The report received by Public Complaints Bureau showing that the complaints towards the hospitals under Ministry of Health were classified as: a) dissatisfaction of services; b) misconduct of workers; c) complaints on food, drinks and health products; d) less enforcement of non-smoking in public areas and e) dissatisfaction of the public facilities. Dissatisfaction of services towards the hospital was identified as the top complaints by Public Complaints Bureau (Public Complaints Bureau Prime Minister's Department, 2013).

Although the complaints received by Public Complaints Bureau were mainly about dissatisfaction towards the hospital service quality as a whole, it can be assumed that the complaints largely involved nurses as they are key personnel who provided ongoing care and respond to patients' needs during their stay in the hospital. The interaction time between the nurses and the patients was longer compared to other personnel working in the hospital (Fleischer, Berg, Zimmermann, Wuste and Behrens, 2009). Furthermore, nurses' workforce represents the largest

workforce in the Malaysian healthcare sector. They made up about 53% of the total healthcare human resources as reported in the MOH Health Facts data (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2013).

On top of that, the department of Ministry of Health also tracks the public complaint separately. The Ministry of Health complains report showing that unsatisfactory of hospital service quality was identified as the top categories of the complaint list for both year 2012 and 2013 (Unit Komunikasi Korporat, 2014). The reports also showing substantial increased in the numbers of patient complain on the unsatisfactory of hospital service quality in where a total of 1,449 (equivalent 25%) cases received in year 2012 up to a total of 1,663 (equivalent 31%) cases in year 2013. In addition, nurse was identified as the top two resources in public hospital with the highest complaints. About 30% of the complaints were related to nursing care services.

On the other note, Abdul Rashid (2011), former Deputy Health Minister also stressed that the nurses in Malaysia should perform their duties in a more professional, efficient, competent and accompanied by elements of soft skills in providing nursing care to the patients. This is owing to the facts that majority of the complaints received by Ministry of Health were related to nurses' nursing care. In addition, a study conducted by Tan, Soong and Lim (2013) in the Malaysian public hospitals revealed that patients were moderately satisfied with the nursing care services (mean score = 3.13). The nurses' customer-oriented behavior to resolve patients issue and provide better patient care may have been overlooked by the government as the researcher did not find any studies related to customer-oriented behavior of nurses in the Malaysian public hospitals during the period of the study. Nurses' customer-oriented behavior was crucial in assisting hospitals to gain positive outcomes from the patients as the hospital performance was largely influenced by the way the patients being treated by the nursing staffs (Rad, Mat Som and Zainuddin, 2010). Without understanding customer-oriented behavior, nurses would not carry out their entrusted responsibilities effectively and would not give higher priority to the patients. As a result, patients may not get the proper care and attention. Unfortunately, the levels of customer-oriented behavior among nurses in the

Malaysian public hospitals still remain unknown as no study in this field have been conducted in the public hospitals. Therefore, there is a need to study nurses' customer-oriented behavior to bridge the gap and understand how it can improve the nurses' job performance.

Study on customer-oriented behavior among nurses' in the public hospitals is important and necessary. Embracing customer-oriented behavior was mainly to achieve higher quality nursing care, service and customers satisfaction. In order to generate customer-oriented behavior, personality traits have long been studied by researchers as significant predictors of human behavior (Liu and Chen, 2006). Researchers such as Barrick and Mount, (1991), Brown *et al.* (2002) and Barrick and Mount (2005) had identified that basic personality traits were related to predict and explain human behavior at work. Furthermore, personality trait theories had sought to identify and described the underlying traits that explain people's behavior (Allport, 1961). Many personality psychologists and researchers recognized that the Big Five personality traits described the most salient aspects of human personality and it had been comprehensively used in organizations (McCrae and Costa, 1997; Mount, Barrick and Stewart, 1998; John and Srivastava, 1999; O'Connor, 2002).

Previous meta-analysis had identified several significant correlations between personality traits and human behavior (Barrick and Mount, 1991; Caldwell and Burger, 1998; Brown *et al.*, 2002; Barrick and Mount, 2005; Lanjananda and Patterson, 2009; Watrous, 2010). For examples, the relationship between personality traits and job performance (Barrick and Mount, 1991); the relationship between personality, voice and cooperative behaviors (LePine and Dyne, 2001); personality traits as an important construct to determine workers customer orientation (Brown *et al.*, 2002); personality traits and work-related behaviors such as counterproductive behavior, turnover, citizenship behavior, job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Barrick and Mount, 2005); personality traits and organizational factors such as service climate and Human Resource Management (HRM) practices (Liao and Chuang, 2004). Most of the results examining personality traits were found significantly related to human behavior.

However, literature on these studies focused more on service industries such as food service industry, occupational groups like professionals & police, sales and services, restaurant and colleges. Although there were studies in the area of healthcare industries in relation to personality traits and human behavior (Lanjananda and Patterson, 2009; Mechinada and Patterson, 2011), these studies were conducted in other countries and not in Malaysia. Therefore, this study intent to investigate the relationship between personality traits and customer-oriented behavior among nurses in the public hospitals in Malaysia.

In addition to the personality traits as predictor variables, study on others factors that can influence customer-oriented behavior can still be explored further. Few studies had suggested that there was positive relationship between job satisfaction and customer-oriented behavior among the frontline employees (Hoffman and Ingram, 1992; MacKenzie, Podsakoff and Ahearne, 1998; Pettijohn *et al.*, 2002; Donovan *et al.*, 2004; Gil *et al.*, 2005; Rehman, 2009; Mechinda, and Patterson, 2011). On top of that, it was also argued that satisfied employees had better understanding on customers' needs and took more initiative to satisfy customer (Ramendra and Gopal, 2013). Higher level of job satisfaction made the employees enjoy their work and had better interaction with the customers. This would likely made them exhibit customer-oriented behaviour. Subsequently, higher level of job satisfaction was beneficial to the organization in terms of performance and productivity (Hoffman and Ingram, 1992). Mechinda, and Patterson (2011) also claimed that when service employees were happy with their jobs, they were willing to put in extra effort and be attentive to customer's requests in order to perform their duties professionally. Additionally, the relationship between job satisfaction and customer-oriented behaviour was also supported by the Affect Theory of Social Exchange, which proposes that individuals would engage in reciprocal behaviours and support parties from whom they benefit (Hoffman and Ingram, 1991).

Nevertheless, the relationship between job satisfaction and customer-oriented behavior among the nurses in the Malaysian healthcare context still remain unknown as most studies were conducted in other countries US, Taiwan, India, Beijing, China, Europe and Australia but not in Malaysia.

Although personality traits may influence human behavior, Barrick and Mount (2005) claimed that moderating variables must be accounted in order to adequately explain the influence of personality traits on human behavior. Apart from that, Hoffman and Ingram (1991) also suggested moderating variables must be accounted in order to adequately explain the relationship between job satisfaction and customer-oriented behavior as job satisfaction was an emotional, affective or attitudinal response that had the ability to influence the level of customer-oriented behavior. Therefore, a study of moderating effect on the relationship between personality traits, job satisfaction and customer-oriented behavior was needed as moderator variable may reduce or enhance the direction of the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variables (Kim, Kaye and Wright, 2001).

Recently, researchers had begun to test for moderating effects of affective commitment on psychological well being, trust human behavior and workplace outcomes (Sebastiano, 2011; Groff, 2012; Jain, Khalil, Johnston and Cheng, 2014; Rivkin, *et. al.*, 2015). This was because affective commitment had a potential buffering moderator that may impact human behavior (Rivkin, *et. al.*, 2015). In addition, Williams and Sanchez (1998) suggested that employees were more likely to be customer-oriented if their level of commitment and involvement in the organizational was high. Additionally, Meyer and Allen (1997) indicated that affective commitment related individual emotional attachment to their organization and it had strong correlation with desirable outcomes. In healthcare context, nurses need to be emotional attached to the hospitals which comprised of nurses' feelings of involvement, kind of loyalty towards the hospitals, feeling good, enjoying working in hospitals and satisfied with the working environment (Lanjananda and Patterson, 2009). Nurses who are emotionally attached to the hospitals will be more affectively committed. Therefore, it is postulated that affective commitment is able to stimulate the relationship between personality traits, job satisfaction and customer-oriented behavior. Affective commitment had been selected to be the sole dimension of moderator because affective commitment involved in emotional attachment of an individual to an organization in this study and considered to be the major determinant of organizational effectiveness.

On top of that, past studies have confirmed that affective commitment play a separate role as moderating variables as the interaction effective of affective commitment will exert the independent variable on a particular behavior. Past studies by Groff (2012); Tan and Lim (2012) and Lee and Chen (2013) had indicated that organizational commitment of an employee does moderate the relationship between the study variables in organizations such as Certified Public Accounting (CPA) firms, Small to Medium Sized Enterprises (SME), and retail industry. However, the moderating variable of affective commitment was not study on the relationship between personality traits, job satisfaction and customer-oriented behavior.

In addition, the study of moderating variables on the relationship between personality traits, job satisfaction and customer-oriented behavior was focusing on the variables such as group culture, emotional intelligence and services climates, but not affective commitment. Therefore, in order to fill up the theoretical gaps, the research framework with affective commitment as moderating variables on the relationship between personality traits, job satisfaction and customer-oriented behavior was proposed and to be tested in Malaysia healthcare context.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the gaps in the literature, this study seeks answers to the following research questions:

- 1) What is the level of customer-oriented behavior among nurses in the public hospitals in Malaysia?
- 2) What is the relationship between personality traits and customer-oriented behavior among nurses in the public hospitals in Malaysia?
- 3) What is the relationship between job satisfaction and customer-oriented behavior among nurses in the public hospitals in Malaysia?

- 4) Does affective commitment moderates the relationship of personality traits, job satisfaction and customer-oriented behavior among nurses in the public hospitals in Malaysia?

1.5 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to conduct a study on the customer-oriented behavior of nurses in the Malaysian public hospitals. The specific objectives of this study are listed as below:

- 1) To determine the level of customer-oriented behavior among nurses in the public hospitals in Malaysia.
- 2) To examine the relationship between personality traits and customer-oriented behavior among nurses in the public hospitals in Malaysia.
- 3) To examine the relationship between job satisfaction and customer-oriented behavior among nurses in the public hospitals in Malaysia.
- 4) To examine the moderating effect of affective commitment on the relationship between personality traits, job satisfaction and customer-oriented behavior among nurses in public hospitals in Malaysia.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The rapid growth of the healthcare industry and the existence of a more educated population had resulted in higher demand and expectation of the nursing care services. Knowing that integration of customer orientation approach in the organization may improve service quality of healthcare providers and indirectly

enhance the standard of nursing care (Peccei and Posenthal, 2001), this study attempted to explain the influence of personality traits and job satisfaction in generating customer-oriented behavior among nurses in the Malaysian public hospitals. Additionally, this study further explored the moderating effect of affective commitment on the relationship between personality traits, job satisfaction and customer-oriented behavior. It is expected that customer-oriented behavior will elevated the standard of nursing care among the nurses in the public hospitals in Malaysia.

The findings of this study provided both theoretical and managerial implications. In terms of theoretical contribution, this study proposed a conceptual framework for public healthcare industry in the area customer-oriented behavior. It suggested a better understanding of personality traits and job satisfaction to assimilate the concept of customer-oriented behavior among nurses in fulfilling patient's needs and improved their service behavior. Past study on customer-oriented behavior had been conducted in other context such as banking, restaurant, insurance company, financial entities and commodity businesses (Narver and Slater, 1990; MacKenzie *et. al*, 1998; Brown *et al.*, 2002; Gil *et al.*, 2005; Chen and Chen, 2010). However, this study focused on nurses in the public hospitals as there were only few studies had been done in the area of healthcare industries, for examples, Hoffman and Ingram (1992); Lanjananda and Pattterson (2009); Mechinda and Patterson (2011) and Johari and Ong (2013).

Furthermore, most studies on customer-oriented behavior were conducted in western countries such as Darby and Daniel (1999) and Bellou (2009), Korea (Kim, Moon, Han and Tikoo, 2004), Pakistan (Altaf, Afzal, Hamid and Jamil, 2011), Thailand (Lanjananda and Pattterson, 2009 and Mechinda and Patterson, 2011), Taiwan (Chih, *et. al.*, 2009). Only few studies were done in Malaysia healthcare context, for example Johari and Ong's (2013) conducted the study in the health tourism context. The findings from previous studies in other countries may not indicate the terms of customer-oriented behavior of the public hospital nurses in Malaysia. Therefore, exploring the applicability of customer-oriented behavior in Malaysia would add significant knowledge to the existing literature.

This study also attempts to add to the existing literature by introducing affective commitment as a moderator which may enhance the relationship between personality traits, job satisfaction and customer-oriented behavior. It offered a new significant variable in enhancing the nurses' customer-oriented behavior and supported the importance of affective commitment as moderator in Malaysian public hospital theoretically. The outcome of this study added to the literature of affective commitment as moderating variable in the relationship of personality traits, job satisfaction and customer-oriented behavior. It is believed that the findings from this study will be relevant for future research in other healthcare tiers that are equally important such as public health clinics (klinik kesihatan), community clinics (klinik desa) and dental clinics (klinik pergigian) or the frontline employees of other service industries such as beauty and saloon, insurance, banking, immigration department and post office.

In terms of managerial contribution, the findings of this study can be used to provide information and further understanding of personality traits that will assist the hiring managers in hiring customer-oriented nurses. The hiring managers can apply the information as a basis to choose the right candidates that potentially to exhibit customer-oriented behavior. In addition, managers can customize and design training programs that related to job satisfaction and affective commitment to improve the nurses' customer-oriented behaviors. The organization can incorporate the element of personality traits and demographic factors to segregate nurses into different groups and re-trained with more effective manner. Apart from that, through identification of current level of the nurses' customer-oriented behavior, managers can introduce strategic plan that can improve their job performance as well as increase their standard of nursing care.

Additionally, customer-oriented behavior also assists the nurses themselves in complying with the Code of Professional Conduct for Nurses (1998) especially in nursing care. By practicing customer-oriented behavior approach, the quality of services rendered to the patients was expected to increase and it would also increase the patients' satisfaction level. As such, a thorough understanding of the ways in which individual personality traits contribute to customer-oriented behavior is

important and necessary. The policy makers also can include customer-oriented behavior in the key performance indicator (KPI) for yearly performance appraisal.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study aims to investigate the level of customer-oriented behavior, the relationship between personality traits, job satisfaction and customer-oriented behavior and the moderating effects of affective commitment among nurses who work in the Malaysian public hospitals. Public hospitals were selected in this study because public healthcare sector was dominant in Malaysia. Around 70% of the healthcare services were provided by the public sector and was used by most of the Malaysia population and attracts those needy and financially stretched patients hospitals (Market Watch, 2012). Thus, it is essential for this study to focus on public hospitals.

Nurses were selected as the respondents in this study because they represent the largest workforce in the hospitals and had longest interaction time with the patients. Based on the Ministry of Health Malaysia (2013), Health Facts data, there were a total 56,089 nurses in the public hospitals in the year of 2012. Nurses constitute the highest population among workers in both public and private healthcare sector. Furthermore, nurses were the key personnel who provide ongoing care and responding to the patients' needs especially in relation to health and/or illness in the hospital. Additionally, the interaction duration between nurses and the patients was considered the longest if we compared with other workforce in the hospital (Fleischer *et al.*, 2009). The interaction starts from the time the patient admitted until the patient discharged from the hospital. With nurses constituting majority of the healthcare workforce and their interaction duration with the patients, it was deemed most appropriate to select nurses as the intended respondents of this study. Lastly, based on the Unit Komunikasi Korporat Report (2014) 30% of the complaints received by Ministry of Health were related to nursing care services and nurses were the top two resources in public hospital with the highest complaints.

The population frame for this study comprise of nurses in the national-level hospital and two state general hospitals. The national-level hospitals was Hospital Kuala Lumpur (HKL) which serves as the National Referral Centre and the largest hospital in the country which consists of 83 wards and 2500 beds, providing a comprehensive range of tertiary care services in the capital city, Kuala Lumpur and central of Peninsula Malaysia. While another two State general hospitals namely, Hospital Sultanah Aminah (HSA) and Hospital Pulau Pinang (HPP) were the main general hospital with number of hospital bed above 900 and the main referral and tertiary health centre for the region of north and south of Peninsula Malaysia. The three general hospitals cover northern, central and southern region of Peninsular Malaysia.

Customer-oriented behavior was selected as the dependent variable in this study because nurses' customer-oriented behavior was very crucial in assisting the hospitals to gain positive outcomes from the patients, as the hospitals performance were largely influenced by the way the patients being treated in the hospitals (Rad *et al.*, 2010). In addition, nursing care plays a prominent role in determining the overall satisfaction of patients' hospitalization experience (Tan *et al.*, 2013) and able to assists the Ministry of Health to elevate the customer-oriented performance of nursing staffs. The Five Factor Model (FFM) of personality traits was selected to be used in this study. This is because Five Factor Model (FFM) was able to support a more comprehensive explanation of human personality factor (Goldberg, 1993) and had an advantages in providing a conceptual foundation that helps to examine theoretical issues (Salgado, 1997). Furthermore, many personality psychologists had recognized the Five Factor Model (FFM) in their studies (Barrick and Mount, 1991; Salgado, 1997; McCrae and Costa, (1997); Nikolaou and Robertson, 2001). Job satisfaction was selected to be used in this study because previous researchers had proven the conceptual of the relationship between job satisfaction and customer-oriented behavior (Hoffman and Ingram, 1991; Chih *et. al.*, 2009) and supported by the Affect Theory of Social Exchange.

Furthermore, affective commitment has been identified as the moderating variable that will lead researcher to the understanding of employee's emotional

attachment to an organization and help to explain and shape the employee customer-oriented behavior in the organization (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Several past studies had reported that affective commitment had a larger effect on work behavior (Irving and Meyera, 2994; Meyer, Standley, Herscovitch and Topolaytsky (2002); Mattila, 2004; Dean, 2007; Raluca, 2013). Furthermore, the influence of affective commitment is an important area of inquiry that has not been adequately addressed in previous studies.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

This section provides definitions for terms relevant to this study which include customer-oriented behavior, personality traits, job satisfaction and affective commitment.

1.8.1 Customer-Oriented Behavior

Customer-oriented behavior had been conceptualized from customer orientation literature in the marketing management. The term customer orientation was developed from studies related to market orientation and being a subset of market orientation (Kohli and Jaworski, 1993). Customer orientation was defined as a group of actions taken by the business provider to support their sales business and service staff based on the prioritization of the customer needs and customer satisfaction. The business providers focus their business activities and products in which focus on the customers and bridge to their wants and demands. On the other hand, behavior was the range of actions or response of an individual as well as group to an action, environment, person or stimulus.

In the healthcare context, customer-oriented behavior was defined as to the extent in which the nurses' understand the necessities of the patients. Nurses would help the patients and provided solution which suit to the patients (Chien *et al.*, 2008). Further, Lanjananda and Patterson (2009) defined customer-oriented behavior as

putting patients' interest in the first priority while Johari and Ong (2013) defined customer-oriented behavior as the service behavior and the ability of the caregivers to adjust their service in order to meet customer satisfaction.

In order to measure the level of customer-oriented behavior in this study, Saxe and Weitz (1982) definition was adopted. Their definition was consistent with the intention of customer-oriented behavior that ultimately aiming at increasing customer satisfaction. They had also introduced a selling orientation/ customer orientation (SOCO) scale that contributes towards the conceptual development of customer orientation in an organization.

1.8.2 Personality Traits

Personality was a dynamic and organized set of characteristics possessed by an individual that may influence emotional, interpersonal, experiential, attitudinal, motivational and cognitional behaviors in different situations (McCrae and Costa, 1989). The study of personality was based on the essential insight that all people were having similarity as well as having differences. According to Robbins (1993 pg100), Gordon Allport defined personality as “the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine unique adjustments to his environment” and this definition was the most frequently used definition of personality.

In the healthcare context, personality traits was referred to individual nurses' differences in tendencies to show consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings and actions. The Five-Factor personality traits defined by Johari and Ong (2013) in the healthcare context were:

1. Openness to experience: Having wide range of interest, imagination and think out of box in generating ideas or solution in order to provide useful information to the patients as well as helping the patients to resolve problems.

2. Conscientiousness: Careful and responsible in carrying out their duty completely and effectively.
3. Extraversion: Personnel who were gregarious, outgoing, sociable and active in the hospitals. They were full of energy while performing their job and feel comfortable while in groups.
4. Agreeableness: Friendly, empathic, polite and helpful personnel. They were supportive and concerned towards others.
5. Neuroticism: Personnel who had the tendency to become upset, emotional and moody.

The Big Five personality traits were selected to use in this study as it emerged across languages and different theoretical perspectives. Besides, the Big Five Inventory (BFI) was recognized and used by many researchers in their study (LePine and Dyne, 2001; Brown *et al.*, 2002; Lim and Johari, 2012; Johari and Ong, 2013).

1.8.3 Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction had been defined in many different ways. Some of the researchers believed job satisfaction was a single globe concept on an individual overall satisfaction to the extent individual like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) over their job tasks (Lee and Ahmad, 2008). According to Davis and Nestrom (1985), job satisfaction represented a combination of positive and negative feelings of an individual towards their job task. It represents to the extent individual expectations were match the real rewards and linked closely with the work place behaviour.

In the healthcare context, job satisfaction was defined as the overall satisfaction of the nurses towards the healthcare organization in term of intrinsic (individual achievement, send of accomplishment) and extrinsic factors (rewards, working environment). Meanwhile, Mechinda and Patterson (2011) claimed that job

satisfaction was the level of the happiness of the nurses about jobs. Once the nurses were satisfy with their jobs, the nurses would demonstrate the behavior by paying attention to the customer's needs, adjusting and delivering the nursing care accordingly. In order to measure the nurses' job satisfaction level in this study, the Warr Job Satisfaction Scale developed by Warr, Cook and Wall (1979) was adapted.

1.8.4 Affective Commitment

Across the literature study of organizational commitment, there were different conceptualizations on organizational commitment by different researchers. Basically, the term of organizational commitment defined as the strength of feeling and responsibility that an employee has towards the mission of the organization (Porter *et al.*, 1974). Meyer and Allen (1991) focused on theorizing a more comprehensive conceptual model for organizational commitment. They described organizational commitment as employees' psychological state in reference to the relationship between employees and organization, and the willingness of employees to be a member within the organization. They developed the three most important dimensions of organizational commitment namely: Affective commitment (AC), normative commitment (NC) and continuance commitment (CC).

In the healthcare context, organizational commitment was defined as the relationship between member and the hospital and the willingness of the individual be part of the membership in the hospital. Besides, it was also a kind of loyalty reflected by the individual towards the hospital. On top of that, based on Meyer and Allen (1991) categorization of affective commitment, personnel with high affective commitment remain in the hospital because they wanted to work in the hospital. For the purpose of this study, organizational commitment would measured based on the first dimensional (Affective commitment) which was adopted from Meyer and Allen (1991). The definition of organizational commitment was found to be broadly used in organizational behavior literature (Ahmad, Mohd and Wan, 2009; Lim and Johari, 2012; Groff, 2012; Gallato *et al.*, 2012) and was now widely recognized as multi-dimensional work attitude (Allen and Meyer, 1996).

1.8.5 Healthcare Services

Healthcare services are intangible product and cannot physically touched, felt, viewed, counted or measures like manufactured goods. Therefore healthcare services depend on service process, customer and service provider interactions and often require patient involvement in the process. The involvement included interactions and extensive communication between the patient and healthcare provider (Tam, 2007). According to Shostack (1985), healthcare services was defined as a period of time during which a patient or their family members directly interacts with a healthcare service provider, including its personnel, physical facilities, equipment and other visible elements. Meanwhile, Gronroos (1984) perceived healthcare service as a result of what patient received and how well the service delivered matches the patients' expectations on a consistent basis. In addition, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) claimed that healthcare services was perceived by patients and stems from a comparison of their expectations of the services they received with the perceptions of the performance of the healthcare service provider. The expectation was referring to the needs of patients and what they feel about the services offered to them. Meanwhile, perception was referring to the patients' evaluation of the healthcare service provider.

According to Lim and Tang (2000), healthcare services possess certain characteristics that patients may find it difficult to evaluate after the services because they lack the necessary knowledge and skills to make the necessary judgment and are obliged to trust the providers. Therefore, Lim and Tang (2000) claimed that healthcare service quality is an elusive and distinctive construct and can be defined from several perspectives including:

- a) The ability to satisfy the needs and expectations of the customer; and
- b) The totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy given needs.

1.8.6 Public Hospitals

Public hospital is a hospital which is owned by a government and heavily subsidized by the government. In Malaysia, the provision of public healthcare services is the responsibility of various ministries and Ministry of Health (MOH) is the main healthcare provider. A public hospital provides preventive, curative, public health services and rehabilitative services at the primary, secondary and tertiary level. There are three types of public hospitals in Malaysia namely the general hospital, district hospitals and specialized/referral medical institutions. General hospitals are providing a full range of healthcare service with around 600 to 700 beds each. District hospitals which are much smaller consist of about 250 to 400 beds each and providing more basic diagnostic and curative healthcare service. Finally, the specialized medical institutions are dedicated for the treatment of specific diseases such as heart diseases, cancer and tuberculosis.

Each of the capital of fourteen states in Malaysia has a general hospital and providing full range of healthcare service. General hospitals are the most preferred public hospitals in Malaysia because of its size, comprehensive range of care and low charges. The focus of this study was the general hospitals from the national level hospital and two state general hospitals located in the region of north and south of Peninsula Malaysia.

1.8.7 Nurses

A nurse is a person who had graduated from the formal nursing education, registered with the Nursing Board Malaysia and met the code of professional conduct requirements for nurses in Malaysia. Nurses are employed in a wide variety of professional settings and specializing in nursing care practices. Nurses contributes to the healthcare and welfare of the society through the protection, promotion and restoration of health, prevention of illness and the alleviation of suffering in the care of individuals, families and communities. The contribution of nurses to the

healthcare and welfare of the society so that they may attain, maintain or recover optimal health and quality of life.

The professional nursing practice included:

- a) Respect for patient: renders care to patient regardless of ethnic origin, nature of health problem, religious beliefs and social status; maintain confidentiality of privileged information; respect their decisions.
- b) Standards of care: to provide a good standard of nursing care; maintain competence in nursing knowledge and skills.
- c) Accountability: responsibility and accountability for her own nursing judgments and actions.
- d) Advocacy: to promote and protect the interest of the patients.
- e) Teamwork: works collaboratively and co-operatively with other members of the healthcare teams.

1.9 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters, namely 1) Introduction; 2) Literature review; 3) Research methodology; 4) Data Analysis; and 5) Results and Discussions.

Chapter 1 introduces the background information of the research study and problem statement which addressed the importance of customer-oriented behavior of nurses in relation to their personality and job satisfaction which is moderate by affective commitment. This chapter also delineated the research questions, research objectives, scope of the study and significance of the study which contributed towards theoretical and managerial contributions.

Chapter 2 reviews the extensive literature of customer-oriented behavior, personality traits and job satisfaction as well as the moderating variable of affective commitment. Past and existing study in the area of customer-oriented behavior which related to personality traits, job satisfaction and affective commitment are discussed specifically according to the objectives of this study. Extensive review of these variables in terms of definition, conceptualization, theories and their interrelationships have provide a better explanation and justification on the proposed research framework and hypotheses development. In this chapter, underpinning theory is introduce and explain to depict the relationship between personality, job satisfaction and customer-oriented behavior as well as the moderating variable of affective commitment. In addition, this chapter also presents a research framework which depicts the relationships between independent and dependent variables and the moderating effect of these relationships. Specific hypotheses about the relationships are proposed in this chapter as well.

Chapter 3 addresses the research methodology for this study. It includes the research design, sampling procedure, measures and instrumentation of this study. In addition, it also explains the methods in performing reliability and validity test as well as data collection procedure and data analysis technique. This chapter is important to give readers the whole scientific research design process which leads to data analysis phase.

Chapter 4 reports the results of data analysis and hypotheses testing. Data analysis methods used in this study are descriptive analysis, data screening, test of validity and reliability of the constructs and hierarchical multiple regression. It also reviews the assumptions of multivariate analysis and methods employs to detect their violation in this study.

Chapter 5 discusses and concludes research findings pertaining to the research questions and its theoretical and managerial implications. In addition, limitations of the study, future research suggestions and study conclusions are provides. This chapter discusses, assesses and provide analyses on the implications of the findings based on the research objectives.

1.10 Summary

In today rapid growth of healthcare industry and the existence of a more educated population had resulted in higher demand and expectation of the nursing care services. Even though the introduction of customer-oriented behavior may improved the standard of nursing care (Chien *et al.*, 2008), little attention have been paid to determine the variables that influence customer-oriented behavior. Therefore, the main focus of this study is to examine the relationship between personality traits, job satisfaction and customer-oriented behavior among nurses in the public hospitals in Malaysia. In addition, this study also looked into the possibility that affective commitment may enhance the relationship of personality traits, job satisfaction and customer-oriented behavior. It was expected that the findings of this study would provided fresh insights that may help to reduce patient complaints and increased the standard of nursing care in the hospitals.

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