

# Service Recovery Performance of Frontline Officer in the Public Sector Organization in Jordan

Sakher A.I Al-Bazaiyah

AL-balqa Applied University, Assalt – Jordan, [bazaiah1@bau.edu.jo](mailto:bazaiah1@bau.edu.jo)

## ABSTRACT

This study considers that management practices have the ability to turn dissatisfied customers to loyal customers through effective service recovery encounter. This study investigates the potential impact of selected management practices on service recovery performance and its outcomes of front-line officers by adapting Boshoff and Allen, (2000) research model. There were front line officers who involve with electronic government were analyzed about their perceptions about public sector organisation management practices. Quantitative approach using multivariate data analysis such as descriptive analysis, reliability analysis and multiple regressions were used to estimate the predictors and its consequences of service recovery performance in the public sector organization (PSO) in Jordan. Results shows that ‘affective organizational commitment’ exert a strong positive relationship compared with customer service training, empowerment and supervisor support. The variable role ambiguity shows a weak non-significant relationship as opposed to the proposed effect. Results also suggest that successful service recovery performance leads to increased job satisfaction and decreased turnover intentions. This study could be generalized as a main guideline for public sector organization in Jordan. Practically, the findings indicate the organizational behavior variables that the manager has to take care to achieve front line service recovery excellence

*Keywords: Service Recovery Performance, Front line Officer, Structural Equation Modeling*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In today’s competitive business world, as like concern on product quality, service firms have also shifted their focus to deliver ‘quality services’ to attain customer satisfaction (Parasuraman, et al., 1995). However, mistakes and failures are inevitable in providing service known as service failure. Service failure is defined as “the experience of service result where service reaches lower than customer expectation” (Bell & Zemke, 1987). Surprisingly, many academicians and practitioners reveals that although service failure may result in loss of customer trust, ‘Effective service recovery encounter’ paves way for turning angry customers into loyal customers (Spreng,et al., 1995). Delivering effective service recovery is a crucial strategy where most service firms are concerned of nowadays specially in setting of public sector organisation field (Zeithmal, et al., 2003) where government agencies in Jordan is not an exception to it.

Public sector management is a very important sector to Jordan. As there is limited manufacturing capabilities all the business imports and exports transactions are based on government agencies. Hence it is important for government agencies to perform well in order to carry out the other businesses smoothly. To date, many studies have tested service recovery performance model in the public sector organization (Boshoff and Allen, 2000; Yavas et al., 2003). This research tests the service recovery performance model in a more different government agencies setting. Public sector management in Jordan who has been enjoying local monopoly power for two decades now faces competition due to deregulation. Thus this study is unique as it examines the service recovery performance model in a state company that has lost its monopoly power and hence their efforts to improve service quality and also service recovery in order to face the competition. This study will also be a great contribution to Maldivian service sector as no research has been conducted dealing service recovery performance in any industry.

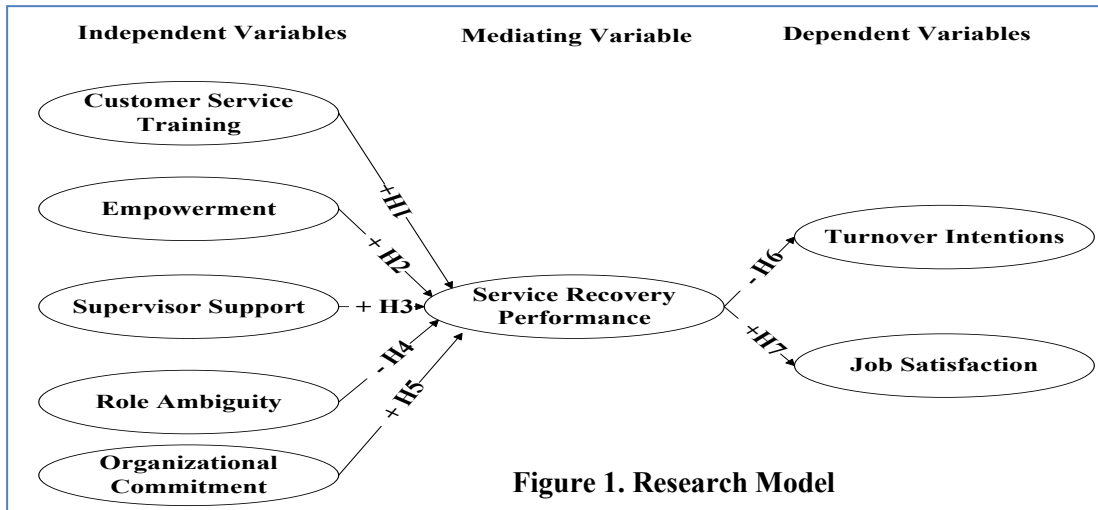
This research intends to focus on front line employees' (FLEs) performance and its consequences due to organizational variables within service recovery context. This is because 60% of service failure was due to front line employees (Tax and Brown, 1998). For an effective service recovery performance of the FLE's, employee attitude and their perceptions about the organization plays a major role (Kirkbir & Cengiz, 2007). Hence the management needs to understand the features in the organization that affects the employee attitude, which in turn affects their service recovery performance. Against this background, the main first objective of this study is to investigate the potential impact of organisational variables on the service recovery performance of FLE of public sector organisation. The second objective is to evaluate the impact of service recovery performance influenced by organisational variables on FLEs' intention to resign and Job satisfaction by using a large state owned enterpris as a case in point. Acknowledging that low levels of service recovery performance and high turnover intentions are not desirable outcomes for an organization, the following are the research questions that this research plans to find answers.

To what extent, do the selected organisational factors influence the service recovery performance of the front-line officers in government organization of Jordan?

To what extent, does effective service recovery performance of front-line officer of government agencies have relationship with turnover intentions and job satisfaction?

## II. CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

The guiding model for this study was adapted from Boshoff and Allen, 2000 (**Figure 1**). Service recovery performance acts as the mediating variable and selected working environment as independent variables. Supervisory



support has been added in addition to the model based on research gap from other literatures (Yavas et al., 2010). The outcome variables due to the service recovery performance are intentions to resign and Job satisfaction.

### A. Customer service Training

According to the study of Bitner et al. (1990), indicates that almost 42.9% of customers responded dissatisfaction because of the employees' inability or unwillingness to respond in service failure situations. Their study confirms "customers' negative reactions to unprompted and unsolicited employee behaviors". It is clear from Bitner et al. (1990) that it is not the quality of the core service or the failure situation that causes the loss of customers most of the time. Indeed, it is the attitude and the behavior of the FLEs' towards the customers either verbally or nonverbally that causes dissatisfied customers. Therefore, FLEs' must be trained especially in interpersonal skills so that they can effectively deal with the angry customers. This would increase the performance of the employees and thus prevents the loss of angry customers (Boshoff and Allen, 2000). Moreover, providing training also shows that the top management is committed and supportive to the FLE in order to carry out their actions (Babakus et al., 2003). It is therefore hypothesized that:

*H1: Training employees to handle customer complaints will exert a positive influence on the service recovery performance of the front-line employees of PSO.*

### B. Empowerment

Empowerment is defined as "active work orientation where an individual wishes and feels able to shape his/her work role and context" (Spreitzer 1995, p. 1444). FLE being crucial in such service recovery encounter, it is

important to empower them to respond appropriately as per the situation. Time of response of the FLE is a very critical element that spins the angry customers into delightful customers (Wertz & Mattila, 2004). If the employees are not empowered then the process of service recovery would be a failure where FLE needs to obtain approval from the management for even most basic decision (Boshoff and Allen, 2000). This brings the customers into a state of more frustrated. Empowerment provides employees the flexibility to make on the spot decisions which is very essential during service failure situations (Hartline and Farrell 1996, p.56). By making on the spot decisions by FLEs' based on situations will minimize the frustration of customers. It is therefore hypothesized that:

*H2: Empowerment of front-line employees will exert a positive influence on the service recovery performance of the front line employees of PSO.*

### **C. Supervisory/Managerial Support**

Supervisor support is defined as the willingness of the supervisor to help and to look after the welfare of the subordinates (Yavas, Karatepe, & Babakus, 2010). Research shows whenever supervisors are supportive, their performance increases which leads to positive outcomes (Babakus et al., 2003). For instance, whenever subordinates are having problem, which they couldn't deal, supervisor should help them to address the issue. If the supervisor is not supportive and doesn't help to solve the issues, then the performance of the employee would eventually decrease. Furthermore, the support from supervisor will also help to build confidence and strengthen the employee-organization relationship as per person-organization theory, which will increase affective organizational commitment and increase performance (Yoon et al., 2004). This is been consistent with the study of Slatten, 2009. Therefore, it is hypothesized that,

*H3: Supervisory / Manager Support will exert a positive influence on the service recovery performance of the front line employees of government agencies.*

### **D. Role Ambiguity**

Front line employees are more exposed to role ambiguity than any other employees in an organization (Wallace & Chernatony, 2009 ; Slatten, 2009; Yavas & Babakus, 2010). Role ambiguity is a situation where employees was unable to provide the service as expected due to uncertainty. Their role of being as a link between customers and the organization makes it more prone to experience such role ambiguous situations. In such case, it is the front line employee who experience frustration, stress and emotional moments, as they are unable to perform their job as expected. This has also been consistent with studies of (Ashill, et al., 2009). It is also indicated in Ashill, et al., 2009 study that these role ambiguity situations would lead to emotional exhaustion affecting their performance, which is the fact mostly responsible for job dissatisfaction and thus turnover intentions. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

*H4: Role ambiguity will exert a negative influence on the service recovery performance of the front line employees of PSO.*

## **E. Organizational Commitment**

Organizational commitment is the last working environment factor that was conceptualized in this research. Based on the literatures, it is evident that front line employees who are affectively committed to an organization expose high performance records. They are the people who work for the company and care about the future of the company. They are the ones who are mostly intrinsically motivated and also extrinsically motivated yet not necessarily extrinsic. Hence it is important that the management of the company need to check first of all whether the needs of the employees are met before focusing on customer needs. This concept is consistent with financial sector also. Findings of recent studies who have studied the organizational commitment of front line employees focusing on financial sector reveal organizational commitment and service quality of the employees have strong positive relationship (Babakus, et al., 2003). Hence it is hypothesized that:

*H5: Front line employees of PSO who have affective commitment toward the organization will expose a higher service recovery performance.*

## **F. Turnover intentions and Job satisfaction**

This study proposes that service recovery performance of the front line employees would lead to two outcomes, which are job satisfaction and turnover intentions. These outcomes have been considered as being important outcomes of service recovery performance by various literatures, which includes (Ashill, Carruthers, & Krisjanous, 2005; Ashill, Carruthers, & Krisjanous, 2006; Ashill, Rod, & Carruthers, 2008; Babakus, Yavas, Karatepe, & Avci, 2003; Yavas, et al., 2003; Slatten, 2009; Zimmerman & Darnold, 2009). Whenever employees perceive that their working environment is being able to provide the necessary support or in other words if the working environment is favorable for them to deliver their service recovery performance, then they will demonstrate a high level of performance and thus effective service recovery. Contrastingly whenever they perceive that the working environment is unfavourable then they will not demonstrate a high level performance, which then leads to turnover intentions. In light of the above discussions above, it is suggested that front line employees who can perform effectively will have higher job satisfaction and lower turnover intentions and vice versa. Thus it is hypothesized that,

*H6: There will be a positive relationship between effective service recovery performance and job satisfaction of the front line employees of PSO*

*H7: There will be a negative relationship between effective service recovery performance and turnover intentions of the front line employees of PSO.*

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship of Public Sector Organizational variables to that of service recovery performance of FLEs' of PSO and its consequences. To achieve the purpose of the study, data were collected from the front line officers of Government Agencies of Jordan focusing on the capital city, which is Amman. The present study determines government agencies of Jordan, which provide direct service to public, and there were 190 front line officers involved as respondents. Questionnaires were distributed as a total for all front line officers working in the public sector organisation. Of which 147 valid responses were obtained with a response rate of 80.32%. The response rate has a confidence level of 95% with a margin of error of 5% (Robert and Daryle, 1970). The composition of the respondents is as follows: 45.6 % are males (n=67) and 54.4 % are females (n = 80). An average respondent of this study can be best described as a female with 54.4% who are aged between 21-30 years (78.2%) having secondary school (48.3%) as the level of education with an experience of 3-5 years (36.1%). For the purpose of this study, the original questionnaire of Boshoff and Allen, 2000 was adapted to 8 variables which consists of totally 33 items. There are totally five organizational variables and two outcome variables and service recovery performance as mediating variable, which totally comprises to 8 variables. Some items were reworded to improve clarity. The organizational variable, organizational commitment questionnaire was adapted from Mowday et al.,1979 and intrinsic Job satisfaction questionnaire was adapted from Babin and Boles, 1998. The new variable 'supervisor support' which is been introduced to the Boshoff and Allen model was adapted from Bell et al, 2004. The statements of the questionnaire were asked to rate based on 5 point likert scale ranging from '5= strongly agree to 1= strong disagree' (see Appendix A). For more clarity, the appropriate sources, the number of items under each variable of the instrument.

### **IV. FINDINGS**

The relationship hypothesized in **Figure 1** was tested for reliability and then Multiple regression analysis was carried out. Results shows that all variables have cronbach value above 0.7 thus indicating adequate internal consistency (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). "Item 4" under customer service training variable is deleted for better cronbach alpha. Means and standard deviations of the variables are presented. **Tables 1, 2, 3** and **Table 4** shows the results obtained for mediating effect of service recovery performance and findings for the respective research questions.

**Table 1.** R values and adjusted R<sup>2</sup> Values for Dependent Variable: Turnover Intention

Variables	With Med.Var		Without Med.Var	
	R value	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	R value	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
Training	0.651	0.415	0.366	0.128
Empowerment	0.630	0.389	0.467	0.213
Role Ambiguity	0.638	0.398	0.237	0.049
Support	0.670	0.441	0.435	0.184
Commitment	0.616	0.371	0.457	0.203

### A. Mediating Effect Testing

This study proposes that service recovery performance of the FLEs' of PSO act as a mediating variable between organizational variables and its outcomes. In order to prove the mediating effect of this study, the process recommended by Baron and Kenny, 1986 cited in (Slatten, 2009) was used. According to Baron and kenny, 1986, the independent variables should show diminished effect on the outcome variables without intervening variable when compared with the results of with intervening variable.

**Table 2.** R values and adjusted R<sup>2</sup> Values for Dependent variable: Job satisfaction

Variables	With Mediating Variable		Without Mediating Variable	
	R value	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	R value	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
Training	0.765	0.579	0.454	0.200
Empowerment	0.774	0.593	0.566	0.316
Role Ambiguity	0.735	0.534	0.418	0.126
Support	0.688	0.465	0.458	0.204
Commitment	0.786	0.613	0.657	0.428

The results from **Table 1** and **Table 2** shows that service recovery performance proved to be a mediating variable between the selected organizational variables (training, empowerment, Role conflict, supervisor support and commitment) and its outcome variables (turnover intentions and job satisfaction) as the diminished effects can be seen according to the conditions of Baron and Kenny (1986).

### B. Results of Hypothesis Testing

Based on Boshoff and Allen, 2000 work, this study examines the FLEs' perceptions of their working environment and their service recovery performance and its outcomes. Against this concept, the following research questions are answered through multiple regression analysis. Research Question 1: To what extent do the selected organizational factors influence the service recovery performance of the front line officer of PSO?

**Table 3.** Summary of the Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Proposed Effect	Obtained Effect	$\beta$ -Coefficient	Significance level
<b>H1: Training</b>	+	+	0.698	0.000
<b>H2: Empowerment</b>	+	+	0.748	0.000
<b>H3: Supervisor support</b>	+	+	0.677	0.000
<b>H4: Role ambiguity</b>	-	+	0.673	0.000
<b>H5: Commitment</b>	+	+	0.780	0.000

**Table 3** also shows the extent to which the selected organizational variables influence their service recovery performance among the PSO FLEs. From the findings, customer service training, empowerment, supervisor support, role ambiguity and organizational commitment shows a positive  $\beta$  coefficient indicating positive relationship with the service recovery performance of the FLEs. Contrarily, role ambiguity is proposed to have negative effect but obtained effect is positive. Thus hypothesis H1,H2,H3 and H5 has been supported and proved to be valid in PSO context. Hypothesis H4 is invalid as the proposed effect and obtained effect mismatches.

Research Question 2: To what extent does effective service recovery performance of front line employees of PSO have relationship with turnover intentions and job satisfaction?

**Table 4.** Summary of the Hypothesis Testing Results by Regression

Hypothesis	Proposed Effect	Obtained Effect	$\beta$ Coefficient	Significance level
H6: SRP and Turnover intentions	-	-	-0.907	0.000
H7: SRP and Job satisfaction	+	+	0.811	0.000

(Note SRP = Service recovery performance)

**Table 4** also shows the extent of service recovery performance among the PSO FLEs relationship with turnover intentions and Job satisfaction. From the findings, the results indicates that whenever FLEs' of PSO were able to provide the service recovery performance effectively, then their turnover intentions would be decreased and Job satisfaction would be increased. That is very strong negative relationship (-0.907) is being proved which makes the H6 valid and strong positive relationship (+0.811) which makes H7 valid. Thus in short, H6 and H7 has been proved to be valid which answers the research question 2.

## **V. DISCUSSIONS**

In today's dynamic competitive service environment of public sector organisation, the performance of the front line employees is vital for sustainability and for competitive advantage. FLE are the building blocks for service companies (ref). This study has examined the relationship of organizational variables and the service recovery performance of the FLEs' working in PSO and its consequences. The findings shows that managment practices do has effect on service recovery performance and also if FLEs' were able to deliver effective service recovery performance they are more job satisfied and thus decreased turnover intentions. Comparing the results with previous studies, Firstly, for 'customer service training' variable (H1), many of the study results have shown insignificant results. For example, Yavas, et al., 2003, Ashill, et al., 2006 and Boshoff and Allen, 2000. Contrary to those researches, the current study has shown positive relationship between customer service training and service recovery performance with a  $\beta$ -Coefficient of 0.698. This may be attributed to the culture of the company or high training focus due to sudden competitive environment. Training will help the FLEs' to build skills necessary to provide the service. Thus both psychologically and also physically, the ability to provide effective service recovery performance is being motivated to employees due to training. That's why training acts as a strong predictor of service recovery performance as proved in this study.

Secondly, considering the variable 'Empowerment' (H2), some researches have supported significant relationship between empowerment and service recovery performance as like this study. For example, Yavas, et al., 2003 (0.23); Boshoff and Allen, 2000 (0.230) and Ashill, et al., 2006 (0.309). Empowering the FLEs is vital as many researchers has advised to do the service recovery process right the first time with speed and good compensation in the event of service failure to retain customers (Wertz & Mattila, 2004). Thus when employees were empowered, they will be able to provide the service with speed which will help to regain customer satisfaction (Boshoff and Allen, 2000). For the third variable, 'supervisor Support' (H3) very scant literatures has examined this variable with service recovery performance such as Yavas et al., 2010. Supervisor support also proves to be a strong antecedent of service recovery performance which is a new variable introduced into the adapted model of Boshoff and Allen, 2000 study. The result indicates that FLEs of PSO greatly depend on supervisor support for providing service. The greater the support from the supervisor, the greater they are willing or capable to provide effective service recovery.

For the variable 'role ambiguity' (H4), the surprising fact is that it has positive relationship with service recovery performance in this study contrasingly to the proposed effect. Many studies are also consistent with this result. Example: Boshoff and Allen,2000; Ashill, et al., 2009 shows insignificant results for this variable. Yet study by Yavas, et al., 2003 showed a significant negative relationship with a value of -0.43. This study result is been agreed by the study of Johnson and Stinson, 1975 cited in Boshoff and Allen, 2000. That is Johnson and stinson, 1975 reveals that not all effects of role ambiquity will give negative reaction to the job performance. Further, the five working environment variables proposed in this study, organizational commitment is the most significant predictor

of employees perceived service recovery performance (H5). It is noted that organizational commitment has strong positive relationship with service recovery performance with a value of 0.780. The high value of this variable was also observed in many study results. For example, Boshoff and Allen, 2000 study have also reported value of 0.782 for this variable. Moreover, path analysis tests by Yavas et al., 2003 and Ashill et al., 2006 showed values of 0.15 and 0.308 respectively which are the highest when compared to other organizational variables. This proves that whenever employee is committed, no matter what they receive in turn, the employee will work hard effectively. Findings indicate that successful service recovery performance reduces turnover intention and increases job satisfaction. Comparing with Boshoff and Allen, 2000 showed a path coefficient of -0.538 for turnover over and +0.654 for job satisfaction. This strong relationship can be attributed to the sampling. Jordan is a country where people can get jobs easily by just having a qualification of secondary school. As most of the respondents of this study possess secondary school, it would be easier to switch jobs easily. Moreover majority of the respondents being permanent FLE, they are more career oriented and thus the more effective they were able to provide the service, the higher their job satisfaction.

## **VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The findings of this research illustrates several implications for the concept of service recovery performance. For a company to implement service recovery strategies, it is vital to understand the nature, the antecedents and the barriers for to carry out the strategy. This study advises managers that whenever a company chooses to give effective service recovery encounter, then before focussing on to developing strategies for outside customers, the developers of service recovery strategy should first focus on the internal customers. This study advises management to focus on working environment variables to market the company's reputation to internal customers. This is been consistent with the study Bowen and Johnston, 1999 where the study reveals that internal service recovery helps to satisfy both employees' and also customers and thus organizational profitability.

From regression analysis findings "affective organizational commitment" shows as the best antecedent of service recovery performance of FLEs' of PSO. Hence the management should consider to take actions to market the companys' vision, mission and goals to the front line staffs for to make employees committed. The results also supports that Empowerment as a predictor of service recovery performance of FLEs'. Therefore, management has to discard the policy of doing this by order and give them the necessary empowerment to take actions and to make independent decisions for to deliver effective service recovery encounter for who are affected once. Knowing the customers well and knowing what they want is a key factor to make them delightful. This can only be happen when the FLEs' have necessary skills and confidence to specially deal with angry customers. Regular training gives confidence that improves the service recovery delivery performance. Supervisor support also being a significant predictor of service recovery performance, it is important that management address this issue too. That is the higher

the supervisor support, the front line employees are more confident onto deliver the service recovery performance effectively.

### **A. Academic Implications**

This study also contributes to the literature in many ways. First of all, the case point of this study is a company who have been enjoying almost all Jordanness customers for decades, suddenly experiences increased competition from other new emerging Government Agencies. Thus this study is conducted in a new Government Agencies environment unlike other studies. This study adds contribution to services marketing literature by focussing service recovery concept on organizational perspective unlike many other studies which focusses service recovery on customer perspective. This study is based on adaptation of model from Boshoff and Allen,2000 and also adding an additional modified model into the services literature. Moreover, unlike Boshoff and Allen, 2000 which focusses on extrinsic satisfaction, this study focus on intrinsic job satisfaction which contributes additional knowledge into the services literature. Furthermore, this research also contributes additional information to turnover literature, that service recovery performance as a predictor for turnover management of Front line employees.

### **B. Limitations And Future Suggestions Of The Study**

The primary limitations that are associated with this study was in data collection and also interpretation of the data. The first limitation of this study being that data was collected only from a single retail company within the retail Government Agencies industry. Hence future studies should focus on to conduct the research in multiple settings for to generalize the results. Thus there arise concern for generalisibility of the findings because the setting cotenxt is single. Secondly, this study uses the data obtained from FLEs' about their performance that is from the same participants. Thus they would be rating themselves based on their peformance. Hence there may be possibilities of exaggerating their performance or derate their performance based on their situation and emotions while they are rating the questionnaire which may leads to biased results (Comon method Bias). Therefore, to avoid common method bias is better to collect data from multiple sources like customers or supervisor evaluations in future. Moreover, to understand the deep concepts of service recovery performance, future studies should include variables such as emotional exhaustion, self efficacy, organizational culture, leadership, structure and rewards. Moreover, future studies should test the hypothesis using path analysis allows more comperehnsive testing of multiple dependent variables more easily compared to regression analysis.

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