

Jay-Customer Behavior's Influence on Job Stress and Customer Orientation: Perceived Organizational Support's Moderating Effect

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Abstract

The study aimed to analyze jay-customer behavior's impact on service industry employees' job stress to understand the importance of personnel management. Additionally, it aimed to identify strategies for managing job stress by examining perceived organizational support's moderating effects. The results show that the subdimensions of jay-customer behavior (i.e., verbal aggression, physical aggression, and sexual harassment) positively influenced employees' job stress. Second, job stress acts as a mediator between customer verbal and physical aggression and customer orientation, but not between customer sexual harassment and customer orientation. Third, organizational support had a moderating effect on the association between customer verbal aggression and job stress. This study demonstrates how jay-customer behavior negatively affects employees and threatens their well-being. It not only enriches the research on jay-customer behavior but also provides implications for service companies toward developing internal marketing strategies for enhancing employee happiness and fostering customer orientation.

Keywords: Jay-customer behavior, Job stress, Customer orientation, Perceived organizational support

1. Introduction

In modern society, the service industry comprises more than half of the entire industry scale (Vargo and Lusch 2004). However, jay-customer behavior has long plagued the service industry. Jay-customer behavior can intentionally or unintentionally create chaos in a service encounter, ultimately leading to negative consequences for organizations, service providers, and other customers (Lovelock 1994). Moreover, the widely circulated notion that "the customer is always right" can engender inequality within the service environment, allowing customers to practice abusive behavior toward service providers (Grandey, Dickter, and Sin 2004).

One survey found that, among the total employed population of South Korea (27.509 million), the proportion of those engaged in emotion-related labor was estimated to be as high as 42.2% (Kim, Yoon, and Jung 2021). Among service providers interacting

with customers, approximately 82% had witnessed or experienced aggressive or abusive behaviors within the last year, and 54% reported that their work was affected by counterproductive customer behavior (Harris and Reynolds 2003). Service providers frequently experience verbal abuse from customers (Harris and Reynolds 2003). Sexual harassment is often more prevalent in the service industry (Morgan and Pritchard 2019). Particularly, in cultures or environments lacking organizational support or concern for service providers, customers' demanding attitudes can make service providers feel powerless (Yagil 2008). Consequently, although service providers may consider rude customer behavior a part of their jobs (Yagil 2008), they are, nonetheless, impacted by the negative consequences that consequently arise within the service industry.

Because customer satisfaction directly impacts a company's competitiveness and profitability, an increasing number of businesses are prioritizing

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customer satisfaction over employee well-being. Consequently, service industries consistently demand increases in their employees' qualifications and competencies for a competitive advantage (Grandey, Fisk, and Steiner 2005). However, the universal presence of customer-centric strategies can create misconceptions among certain customers, who either disregard service personnel's role or misinterpret it as being inconsequential (Hu, Hu, and King 2017). Service employees frequently encounter customer misbehavior during interactions, which can cause stress-related issues (Dormann and Zapf 2004). Ultimately, such jay-customer behavior results in a failure to achieve customer satisfaction and leads to losses for the company (Lovelock 2001).

Jay-customer behavior's impact has been studied in various fields. Previous research has predominantly focused on occupations with a high incidence of customer misbehavior (e.g., hospitals and the service industry) (Michelle Rowe and Sherlock 2005). Moreover, related studies have primarily examined domains such as hotels (Poddar and Madupalli 2012), airlines (Gunnarsdottir et al. 2006), and casinos (Fong, So, and Law 2017), followed by the restaurant industry (Bi et al. 2021) and other service sectors such as banking (Muhammad, Mahadi, and Hussin 2017).

Problematic customers may exert verbal and physical aggression toward service employees, thereby undermining service quality (Harris and Daunt 2013). Such situations can generate a sense of unease among employees (Raza, St-Onge, and Ali 2021) and increase job stress (Bi et al. 2021). Job stress can lead to psychological tension, pressure, and distress, which adversely affect job satisfaction (Chen and Kao 2011), diminish service orientation (Mostafa 2022), increase turnover intention (Lo et al. 2018), and escalate emotional exhaustion, ultimately impeding organizational efficiency (Grandey, Dickter, and Sin 2004).

Although previous studies have investigated negative customer behaviors (Bi et al. 2021; Liu, Kwan, and Chiu 2014), they have overlooked the significant role of organizational support in alleviating such stress. In particular, perceived organizational support (POS) can effectively mitigate job stress for service personnel who are facing specific acts of violence from customers. For instance, installing surveillance cameras in service industries involving extensive customer interactions can significantly reduce violent behavior toward service personnel (Taylor and Gill 2014). Major implications for theory in the management of service employees across several sectors could come from our findings.

Therefore, this study aims to examine jay-customer behavior's impact on service personnel. This

research's specific objectives are as follows: to analyze the relationship between service personnel's perception of jay-customer behavior (verbal aggression, physical aggression, sexual harassment) and job stress and to determine how job stress influences service industry employees' customer orientation. Additionally, to better manage job stress, this study explored organizational support's moderating effect on the association with jay-customer behavior and job stress. Finally, by empirically analyzing jay-customer behavior and job stress in the service industry, this study aimed to demonstrate the practical value of POS. This could contribute toward alleviating service personnel's job stress and toward improving customer-oriented service provision in the service industry. It could also provide service industry managers with information on employee treatment and improvement strategies. In conclusion, this study holds substantial significance, as it offers valuable insights for implementing effective human resource management strategies in the industry of service.

2. Literature review

2.1. Jay-customer behaviors

Jay-customer behavior refers to intentional or unintentional disruptive behavior exhibited by customers in a service setting, resulting in negative effects on organizations, employees, and other customers (Lovelock 1994). Such behavior can lead to psychological, emotional, and physical fatigue and exhaustion among employees along with feelings of self-blame and depression (Harris and Reynolds 2003). Furthermore, Harris and Daunt (2013) revealed that frontline service employees experience dissatisfaction, anger, anxiety, and frustration because of customer misbehavior, leading to reduced work motivation and job satisfaction. This can ultimately lead to a decline in their relevant service organization's market share and profitability (Singh 2000). For instance, service employees tend to respond with apathy when faced with jay-customer behavior, and their attention to customers and customer-oriented information provision significantly diminishes during such service encounters (Zhao et al. 2015).

Lovelock and Wirtz (2004) categorized customer misbehavior into fundamental types such as thief, norm violator, threatener, hostage taker, vandal, and credit violator, while Berry and Seiders (2008) classified such behaviors as being destructive, verbal, and physical violence along with credit violation.

Prior research have primarily focused on three categories of such customer misbehaviors: verbal

Table 1. Summarizes research reports on jay-customer behavior.

Authors	Organizational role of service provider	Jay-customer behaviors
Liu, Kwan, and Chiu (2014)	A chain of restaurants	Sexual harassment
Bi et al. (2021)	Restaurant industries	Sexual harassment Verbal abuse, physical abuse
Kashif, Zarkada, and Thurasamy (2017).	Banking	Verbal abuse
Ben-Zur and Yagil (2005)	Various service roles	Physical attacks, anger, rudeness
Malik et al. (2021)	Banking industry.	Customer aggression
Yagil (2008)	Various service roles	Aggression, sexual harassment
Harris and Reynolds (2003)	Hotel, restaurant, and bar employees	Verbal aggression, physical assaults

aggression, physical aggression, and sexual harassment (Yagil 2008). Based on relevant research (shown in Table 1), this current study divides such jay-customer behavior into three elements: verbal aggression, physical aggression, and sexual harassment. Specifically, verbal aggression refers to customers using offensive language to attack employees, displaying disrespectful attitudes, or shouting at employees. Physical aggression encompasses actions where customers physically assault an employee, exhibit violent behavior towards employees, or intentionally damage equipment. Sexual harassment includes inappropriate sexual comments, deliberate sexual touching or physical harassment.

2.2. Job stress

The concept of job stress originated in the 1970s and is defined as a mismatch between individual capabilities, environmental demands, and work environments (French 1963). Job stress can arise when individuals encounter excessive work tasks or demands that surpass their capabilities. Job stress refers to psychological and physiological reactions that arise from the interplay between individuals and their occupational setting when there is a mismatch between job factors and the personal resources available to them (Hunter and Thatcher 2007). These stress factors can have detrimental effects on individuals' physical, psychological, and emotional health as well as their overall well-being (Mosadeghrad, Ferlie, and Rosenberg 2011).

Karatepe and Choubtarash (2014) discovered that stress causes emotional exhaustion, which, in turn, encourages negative attitudes including turnover intention or job dissatisfaction. Consequently, service providers may initially perceive their workplace stress as a normal aspect of their job. However, over time, they may experience stress, identity confusion, job dissatisfaction, skepticism, and emotional withdrawal, which ultimately negatively impact their customer-oriented service behaviors and attitudes (Kang, Heo, and Kim 2016).

2.3. Customer orientation

Customer orientation can be defined as an organizational culture that effectively implements the behaviors required to provide higher value to buyers (Narver and Slater 1990). Whereas Kotler and Keller (2006) define customer orientation as the development of goods and services based on customer satisfaction and value creation, along with building relationships with customers.

Customer orientation focuses more on customer interests rather than solely pursuing the company's interests and avoids coercive sales behaviors (Kelley and Hoffman 1997). It emphasizes sales behaviors that meet customer needs, takes a long-term perspective, and values customer satisfaction by adopting a problem-solving approach. Customer-oriented service providers aim to help customers achieve satisfaction and maximize their benefits, leading to purchase decisions (Saxe and Weitz 1982). Additionally, Ziggers and Henseler (2016) analyzed customer orientation's impact on firm performance and identified the mediating role of supplier orientation.

Therefore, service providers' customer orientation could affect how customers evaluate services, thus influencing customer satisfaction, loyalty, relationship continuity, and long-term relationship building (Deshpandé et al. 1993). This study utilizes the customer orientation concept developed by Saxe and Weitz (1982) and aims to explore job stress's impact on customer orientation by measuring customer orientation among service professionals.

2.4. Perceived organizational support

Perceived organizational support (POS) is defined as the level of trust that the members of a given organization have in it as a whole—that is, how much they trust it to acknowledge and value their contributions and efforts and provide rewards to enhance their well-being (Eisenberger et al. 1986). This support is not limited to external rewards (e.g., salary increases, promotion opportunities, and training programs offered by the organization); rather, it also

encompasses intrinsic rewards (e.g., fairness, autonomy in job design, and feedback) (Wayne, Shore, and Liden 1997).

POS fulfills individuals' need for self-approval, respect, and social identity, thus creating the expectation that they will be acknowledged and rewarded for exceptional performance beyond their role expectations (Eisenberger et al. 1997). Additionally, organizational support positively impacts job engagement (Wickramasinghe and Wickramasinghe 2011). Moreover, organizational support is not only related to affective commitment and job satisfaction but also has a static relationship with organizational performance (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). Previous research has also shown that POS can positively impact integrity and in-role and extra-role behaviors, reduce absenteeism, and decrease turnover intention (Coyle-Shapiro and Conway 2005; Eisenberger et al. 1997). Hence, this study explores whether improving organizational support in the service environment can mitigate employees' stress caused by inappropriate customer behavior.

3. Research framework and research hypotheses

3.1. Research framework

The research model is shown in Fig. 1.

3.2. Hypotheses development

3.2.1. The relationship between jay-customer behavior and job stress

A research report revealed that customer verbal abuse toward service professionals during interac-

tions significantly impacted their job stress (Dormann and Zapf 2004). Studies have indicated that the frequency of customer verbal abuse influences the intensity of service personnel's related stress (Grandey, Dickter, and Sin 2004). Furthermore, service employees who encounter verbal abuse may exhibit negative reactions such as stress and anxiety (Sofield and Salmond 2003).

Balloch, Pahl, and McLean (1998) found that employees who faced workplace physical aggression experienced varying levels of anxiety and depression. Additionally, Johns and Menzel (1999) pointed out that physical violence can cause personal harm and social disruption, potentially leading to job stress among individuals who are subjected to physical violence. Gettman and Gelfand (2007) provided empirical evidence that people who are being sexually harassed experience psychological distress as well as job dissatisfaction. Liu, Kwan, and Chiu (2014) proposed that sexual harassment is perceived as a stressor by service employees in the hospitality industry. Experience of sexual harassment also negatively affects caregivers' mental health and the quality of the services provided (Cleary et al. 1994). Therefore, We expect that:

H1-1. Customers' verbal aggression positively affects sales service employees' job stress.

H1-2. Customers' physical aggression positively impacts sales service employees' job stress.

H1-3. Customers' sexual harassment positively impacts sales service employees' job stress.

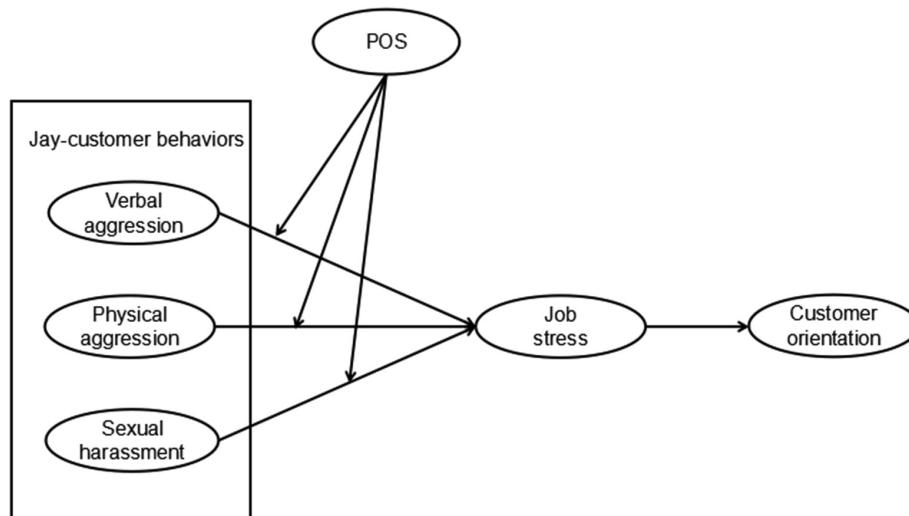


Fig. 1. Research model.

3.2.2. Relationship between job stress and customer orientation

Sauter, Murphy, and Hurrell (1992) highlighted that the annual costs associated with work-related stress (e.g., absenteeism, decreased productivity, and healthcare expenditure) amount to \$50–150\$ billion. Work-related stress exerts adverse effects on physiological, psychological, and behavioral outcomes (Johnson et al. 2005). Work stress directly disrupts employees' normal behavioral patterns and has negative implications for job-related behaviors such as customer interactions. Job stress is a significant determinant that negatively influences customer orientation (Hoffman and Ingram 1992). Based on these seminal studies, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2. *Job stress negatively impacts sales service employees' customer orientation.*

3.2.3. The mediating role of job stress

Whenever service industry employees face abusive clients, they might not have the resources to address the needs of the customers, which could result in subpar performance in their role (Cheng et al. 2020). Additionally, any instances of unpleasant or disrespectful behavior from customer during interactions with staff will raise the pressure, which could negatively impact their general productivity and well-being (Chu, Baker, and Murrmann 2012). As argued earlier, in the service industry, employees are particularly vulnerable to various strains such as emotional exhaustion, stress (Chen and Kao 2011; Karatepe and Choubtarash 2014). These factors, in turn, influence their work behaviors (Weiss and Cropanzano 1996). Building on the findings, it is proposed that jay-customer behavior negatively impacts customer orientation by exacerbating work stress. This suggests that work stress may play a mediating role in the relationship between jay-customer behavior and customer orientation. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are posited:

H3-1. *Job stress has a mediating effect between customers' verbal aggression and sales service employees' customer orientation.*

H3-2. *Job stress has a mediating effect between customers' physical aggression and sales service employees' customer orientation.*

H3-3. *Job stress has a mediating effect between customers' sexual harassment and sales service employees' customer orientation.*

3.2.4. Moderating effect of POS

Muschalla, Heldmann, and Fay (2013) argued that providing organizational support to employees can positively affect their health and help reduce their anxiety and stress. They noted that workplace violence (e.g., threats, verbal aggression, and intimidation) should be considered a potential source of stress in the work environment. However, perceived intraorganizational support can mitigate such violence's negative effects (Leather et al. 1998). Offering organizational support to individuals who have experienced physical violence effectively reduces their tension and stress (Schat and Kelloway 2003).

From the perspective of organizational behavior, POS could reduce job stress (Kang, Heo, and Kim 2016). Sexual harassment is generally recognized as a job stressor (Willness, Steel, and Lee 2007), and the organizational role is crucial in minimizing its occurrence (Bell and Menguc 2002). POS can also constitute a preventive policy to reduce sexual violence (Stamper and Johlke 2003).

In summary, previous research suggests that organizational support may help alleviate sales and service employees' job stress. Accordingly, we propose:

H4-1. *The higher the POS for sales service personnel, the lower the positive impact of customers' verbal aggression on job stress.*

H4-2. *The higher the POS for sales service personnel, the lower the positive impact of customers' physical aggression on job stress.*

H4-3. *The higher the POS for sales service personnel, the lower the positive impact of customers' sexual harassment on job stress.*

3.3. Data collection

This study survey, which was collected from October 26, 2022, to November 8, 2022, targeted 300 service industry workers in Korea (age range: 20s to 60s). Among the participants who had experienced jay-customer behavior, 206 in total, of these, 66 were males (32%), and 140 were females (68%), indicating a higher proportion of females. Regarding age group, those in their 40s constituted the highest proportion (67 respondents; 32.5%). Regarding educational qualification level, 19.9% had a high school qualification or lower, 2.9% were currently enrolled in university, 66% were university graduates, 0.5% were currently enrolled in graduate school, and 10.2% were graduate school graduates. The monthly income distribution was as follows: participants

earning less than 2 million won accounted for 23.3%, those earning from 2 million to less than 3 million won accounted for 38.5%, those earning from 3 million to less than 4 million won accounted for 25.7%, those earning from 4 million to less than 5 million won accounted for 6.8%, and those earning from 5 million won to more accounted for 5.8%. Regarding industry, 15% were food-service workers, 2.9% were hotel staff, 45.6% were store salespersons, 1% were bankers, 25.2% were skincare nurses, 6.8% were customer-service representatives, and 3.4% were government officials. Employment types were categorized as part-time (12.6%), contract (11.7%), or regular (75.7%). Regarding marital status, 48.5% were married, 46.6% were unmarried, 4.4% were divorced or widowed, and 0.5% belonged into the “other” category. Finally, regarding work experience, 12.1% had less than one year of experience, 22.8% had one to fewer than three years, 15.5% had three to fewer than five years, 20% had five to fewer than 10 years, and 28.6% had ten or more years.

3.4. Measures

Table 2 presents the study design’s operational definitions and measurement variables and its hypothe-

ses. Jay-customer behavior is defined as abnormal customer consumption behavior or inappropriate behavior that disrupts service providers’ services and has detrimental effects on the organization and the other customers (Jeong and Kim 2015). Following previous studies, customer misbehavior was measured by dividing it into three items of verbal aggression, four items of physical aggression, and four items of sexual harassment. Verbal aggression was defined as the act of verbally attacking others, whether intentional or unintentional, and the measurement items for verbal aggression were based on Dormann and Zapf (2004). Physical aggression was defined as the act of physically attacking others, whether intentionally or unintentionally. To measure physical aggression, four items were constructed based on Bi et al. (2021) and Harris and Reynolds (2003). Sexual harassment was defined as customer harassment that hinders a person’s job performance or fosters a negative workplace environment through unwanted sexual advances, demands, or behaviors. The sexual harassment-related measurement items were composed of four items based on studies by Alrawadieh et al. (2022) and Bi et al. (2021). Furthermore, job stress was defined as “negative psychological states that are manifested physically and psychologically due to

Table 2. Convergent validity.

Construct	Item	Factor loading	CR	AVE
Verbal aggression	Customers frequently yell us.	.872	.838	.634
	Customers have verbally attacked us.	.753		
	Customers are always complaining about us.	.758		
Physical aggression	Customers express their complaints in physically aggressive manner to me.	.763	.856	.598
	Customers are under the influence of alcohol and behave aggressively and brutally.	.741		
	Customers vandalize or remove objects aggressively.	.794		
	Customers inflict physical damage on other customers or service employees.	.796		
Sexual harassment	Customers make direct physical contact with me.	.577	.810	.520
	Customers stared at in a sexual way	.683		
	Customers have repeatedly made sexual jokes.	.793		
	Customers make inappropriate sexual remarks to me.	.808		
Job stress	When I’m at work, I’m usually under a lot of pressure.	.822	.902	.698
	I become quite furious or frustrated at work a lot of the time.	.859		
	When I think about my job, I get a tight feeling in my chest.	.796		
	I frequently feel uncomfortable or uptight at work.	.862		
Customer orientation	I believe that one of the most important aspects of my profession is to provide consumers with prompt and efficient service.	.835	.920	.697
	I attempt to reach my objectives by gratifying my consumers.	.865		
	When it comes to my job, the customer comes first.	.859		
	I try to answer a customer’s product queries as accurately as possible.	.892		
	If possible, I meet all requests made by my customers.	.712		
Perceived organizational supported	The organization appreciates my contribution towards its well-being .	.826	.898	.639
	The organization takes my aims and values seriously.	.844		
	The organization is genuinely concerned about my well-being.	.833		
	The organization is willing to help me when I require exceptional support.	.731		
	The company is proud of my achievements at work.	.755		

$\chi^2/df = 1.577$, GFI = .861, CFI = .952, NFI = .881, TLI = .953, RMSEA = .053.

Table 3. Discriminant validity analysis.

Variables	Verbal aggression	Physical aggression	Sexual harassment	Job stress	Customer orientation
Verbal aggression	.796**				
Physical aggression	.433*	.773**			
Sexual harassment	.366*	.432*	.721**		
Job stress	.522*	.479*	.432*	.835**	
Customer orientation	-.456*	-.501*	-.512*	-.665*	.834**

Note: **Values located on the diagonal are the square roots of AVEs; * $p < .05$.

job-related factors and personal and interpersonal interactions" (Arshadi and Damiri 2013; Jamal 2005). To measure job stress, four items were constructed based on Parker and DeCotiis (1983) and Lambert, Hogan, and Griffin (2007). Customer orientation was defined as the attitude of service providers who understand customer desires and strive to solve customer problems (Saxe and Weitz 1982). The measurement items for customer orientation were composed of five items based on Saxe and Weitz (1982) and Susskind, Kacmar, and Borchgrevink (2007). POS was defined as the level of trust that the members of a given organization have in it as a whole. The POS measurement items were composed of five items based on Eisenberger et al. (1986). The measurement items, excluding demographic items, were rated using a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 that means "strongly disagree" and 5 meaning "strongly agree."

4. Results

4.1. Measurement model

Based on the data, the model fit was found to be acceptable. ($\chi^2/df = 1.577$, GFI = .861, CFI = .952, NFI = .881, TLI = .953, RMSEA = .053) (Kline 2015). The reliability and validity of four constructs—jay-customer behavior, job stress, customer orientation, POS—were evaluated using Cronbach's α , factor loadings, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity following Hair et al.'s (2010) guiding principles. Table 3 displays the confirmatory factor analysis results, and Table 4 lists the discriminant validity. Cronbach's α for the constructs ranged from .799 to .918, and their composite reliability (CR) ranged from .838 to .920 (Table 3).

Convergent validity was demonstrated by each item's loading into its corresponding construct, which complied with the suggested threshold value (Table 3). Similarly, the average variance extracted (AVE) and the values of the recommended indicators were used to determine the convergent validity of the study's measurements. The AVE value for each construct is likewise more than 0.50 (Table 2). Last, we verified that the square roots of the AVEs for each construct were greater than the corresponding inter-construct correlations in order to evaluate the discriminant validity of the measures. For every construct, the square roots of the AVE were greater than the correlation between the constructs (Table 3). Therefore, each dimension's indicator variables' validity and reliability were confirmed.

4.2. Structural model

This causal model also had a good model fit— $\chi^2/df = 2.060$ ($p < .00$)—which is less than 3 (Kline 2015). The other indexes' values were as follows: GFI = .855, CFI = .933, NFI = .897, TLI = .922, RMSEA = .072. Based on the threshold for the index judgment in the previous section, the causal model's goodness-of-fit was found to be overall acceptable. The findings of the hypothesis testing pertaining to direct pathways (see Table 4) indicate that all the proposed hypotheses were supported. Thus, customer verbal aggression ($\beta = .376$, $t = 4.551$, $p < .01$), physical aggression ($\beta = .248$, $t = 2.856$, $p < .01$), and sexual harassment ($\beta = .230$, $t = 2.767$, $p < .01$) were found to have a significant positive impact on job stress among service employees, confirming H1-1, H1-2, and H1-3. Additionally, job stress resulting from customer misbehavior had a significant negative effect on

Table 4. Hypotheses testing results.

	Structural path	β	S.E.	C. R.	p-value	Direction	Results
H1-1	Verbal aggression → Job stress	.376	.062	4.551	***	+	Supported
H1-2	Physical aggression → Job stress	.248	.069	2.856	.002	+	Supported
H1-3	Sexual harassment → Job stress	.230	.149	2.767	.006	+	Supported
H2	Job stress → Customer orientation	-.739	.077	-9.989	***	-	Supported

$\chi^2/df = 2.060$, GFI = .855, CFI = .933, NFI = .879, IFI = .934, TLI = .922, RMSEA = .072.

*** $p < .001$.

Table 5. Direct and indirect effects (Bootstrapping percentile 95 percent CI).

Path	β	95% C.I.	p	Results
H3-1 Verbal aggression → Job stress → Customer orientation	-.145	-.253, -.680	***	Supported
H3-2 Physical aggression → Job stress → Customer orientation	-.084	-.194, -.013	.020	Supported
H3-3 Sexual harassment → Job stress → Customer orientation	-.075	-.170, .010	.084	Rejected

***p < .001.

customer orientation ($\beta = -.739$, $t = -9.989$, $p < .01$); this supported H2.

4.3. Verification of mediating effects

We used a mediation analysis to examine if job stress mediated the relationship between jay-customer behaviors and customer orientation by using the indirect effects bootstrapping method based on Preacher and Hayes (2008). Table 5 indicates that verbal aggression significantly affected customer orientation, with $\beta = -0.145$. Furthermore, the 95% bootstrap CI of (-0.253, -0.680) did not include zero, indicating the presence of mediation. Similarly, for physical aggression and customer orientation, the indirect effect was $\beta = -0.084$, and the 95% boot CI was (-0.194, -0.013), which also did not include zero, suggesting mediation. Consequently, However, regarding sexual harassment and customer orientation, the indirect effect was $\beta = -0.075$, and the 95% boot CI was (-0.170, 0.010), which included zero. This finding indicated that job stress did not mediate the relationship between customer sexual harassment and customer orientation. However, referring to Table 6, it is worth noting that sexual harassment did have a direct effect on customer orientation, with $\beta = -0.270$.

4.4. The moderating effect test

For the moderation analysis, a multi-group causal model analysis was conducted by dividing the data set into two groups: 107 surveys from the group with higher average organizational support and 99 surveys from the group with lower average organizational support. The sub-groups were delineated using the

mean level of POS. To determine the differences between the two groups, the χ^2 -difference test was used to compare an unconstrained model (baseline) and a constrained model.

The multi-group causal model analysis (Table 7) indicated a significant alleviation and direct relationship between POS and both verbal aggression and job stress [$\Delta\chi^2(1) = 12.113$, $p < .01$], supporting H4-1. Specifically, in the high organizational support group, customer verbal violence had little impact on employee stress ($\beta = .152$, $p > .01$), whereas in the low organizational support group, such verbal aggression significantly impacted employee stress ($\beta = .586$, $p < .05$). However, organizational support did not moderate physical aggression's effect on job stress for employees [$\Delta\chi^2(1) = .033$, $p > .01$] and sexual harassment's effect on job stress for service workers [$\Delta\chi^2(1) = 1.022$, $p > .01$]. Therefore, H4-2 and H4-3 were rejected.

5. Discussion and implications

5.1. Discussion

In the current era, where product sales play a significant role, excellent service quality is a key factor for attracting customers; furthermore, consumers' awareness regarding their rights has been increasing. However, it is now important to focus on employees and their work-related stress. Customer orientation and differentiation are becoming increasingly important in the service industry. This research aims to analyze the causal relationship between jay-customer behavior, job stress and customer orientation among service industry professionals; furthermore, by validating this relationship, it suggests that employees'

Table 6. Direct and indirect effects.

Path	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect
Verbal aggression → Job stress	.378		.378
Physical aggression → Job stress	.238		.238
Sexual harassment → Job stress	.200		.200
Job stress → Customer orientation	-.465		-.465
Verbal aggression → Customer orientation	-.071	-.145	-.246
Physical aggression → Customer orientation	-.135	-.084	-.246
Sexual Harassment → Customer Orientation	-.270	-.075	-.363

**p < .01.

Table 7. Overview of the multi-group analysis results.

Path	High-organizational support group (n = 107)		Low-organizational support group (n = 99)		Baseline model	Nested model
	Std. estimate	t-value	Std. estimate	t-value		
H4-1: Verbal aggression → Job stress	.152	1.401	.586	4.718***	$\chi^2(326) = 526.127$	$\chi^2(327) = 538.240$
H4-2: Physical aggression → Job stress	.290	2.365	.164	1.346	$\chi^2(326) = 526.127$	$\chi^2(327) = 526.160$
H4-3: Sexual harassment → Job stress	.431	3.484	.117	1.088	$\chi^2(326) = 526.127$	$\chi^2(327) = 527.149$

Chi-square difference test:
H4-1. $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 12.113, p < .01$ (supported)
H4-2. $\Delta\chi^2(1) = .033, p > .05$ (not supported)
H4-3. $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 1.022, p < .05$ (not supported)

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

managing management of their job stress should be prioritized in order to help them provide better customer service.

5.2. Theoretical implications

This study revealed that most service industry employees have experienced customer misbehavior. It concludes that the notion that “this behavior is part of the service industry” is insufficient for effectively alleviating the negative effect of jay customer behavior on employees. These findings align with previous research (Bi et al. 2021), which indicates that jay-customer behavior directly affects service industry employees’ job stress. This study emphasizes the impact of jay-customer behavior—particularly verbal aggression, physical aggression, and sexual harassment—on service industry employees’ job stress, with verbal abuse having the greatest impact on their job stress. Overall, customer misbehavior has been found to be highly likely to increase service industry employees’ job stress, as confirmed by previous studies. From a theoretical perspective, this study categorized jay-customer behavior into verbal aggression, physical aggression, and sexual harassment to clarify the causal relationship between service industry employees and job stress, thereby making a significant contribution to the field.

Furthermore, the current study’s research findings indicate that service professionals’ work stress negatively impacted their customer orientation. Such work stress becomes evident during employees’ interactions with customers, thereby adversely affecting customer orientation; this is consistent with previous research findings (Daniel and Darby 1997). In short, when service professionals encounter negative customer behavior, their work stress increases, potentially influencing customer orientation and ultimately damaging the company’s image.

While existing research has investigated the mediating variables between jay-customer behavior and customer orientation, the understanding of the role

of job stress as a mediator in this process remains insufficient. Therefore, this study revealed that service personnel’s work stress mediated the relationship between customer language aggression, physical aggression, and customer orientation. However, it has been confirmed that work stress doesn’t mediate the relationship between customer sexual harassment and customer orientation; rather, there is a direct influence from sexual harassment on customer orientation. As sexual harassment is more likely (compared to other forms of violence) to make victims feel shame and psychological harm, it may reduce employees’ respect for customers and customer orientation. Inappropriate customer behavior creates unpleasant work environments, prompting employees to minimize their interactions with customers (Grandey, Dickter, and Sin 2004). According to the research findings, service professionals who have experienced sexual harassment take various measures to maintain their distance from offending customers. For example, they avoid seeking new business relationships with harassers or by delegating tasks related to such customers to colleagues (Gettman and Gelfand 2007).

Moreover, this study demonstrates the importance of POS in alleviating customer misconduct’s impact on job stress. While previous research highlight the role of organizational support in diminishing job-related stressors (McGinley and Wei 2018), however, there is still a lack of full comprehension of how organizational support affects the impact of three categories of jay-customer behavior—verbal aggression, physical aggression, and sexual harassment—on job stress, thereby contributing to the development of existing research. The study results indicated a significant mitigating relationship between organizational support, language aggression, and job stress. Thus, organizations could alleviate work stress by providing emotional support and practical assistance to their employees. Organizational support enhances service professionals’ well-being and happiness and plays a crucial role in alleviating work stress and fostering positive intra-organization work experiences

(Akgunduz, Bardakoglu, and Kizilcalioglu 2023). Therefore, organizations should strengthen their offered organizational support toward addressing customer misconduct by implementing appropriate policies, procedures, and support systems and actively addressing employee complaints and reception. This will help to make employees' work environments safe and healthy, ultimately alleviating work stress and negative situations. However, the research findings indicate that negative factors such as physical aggression and sexual harassment cannot be fully controlled through organizational support alone. Service professionals who have experienced severe physical aggression or sexual harassment may find it difficult to disclose personal privacy issues to their organizations because of concerns about personal information protection. In such cases, they may have to confide their concerns and distress in close relationships. Effectively controlling these factors requires thoughtful and specialized care and support (e.g., family support) beyond POS. In summary, this study found that organizational support plays an important moderating role in addressing customer verbal aggression and alleviating employee stress. Companies should support their employees in their interactions with difficult customers. Properly handling customer misconduct is the primary responsibility of service managers; it is essential for maintaining employee well-being and achieving positive company outcomes.

5.3. Managerial implications

Daunt and Harris (2012) have shown that negative customer behavior is widespread and that its consequences have direct and indirect effects, making it a management issue that requires strategic and tactical attention. Service personnel are consistently expected to prioritize customer satisfaction (e.g., dealing with demands arising from negative customer behavior). However, service employees not only experience stress because of such behavior but also risk decreasing their customer orientations; this situation must serve as a warning to companies. Therefore, effectively managing stress and enhancing customer orientation are crucial for the management of the service industry.

When employees are experiencing work-related stress while dealing with negative customer behavior, companies must strengthen their training and welfare programs to support their policies. This approach could decrease the loss of skilled professionals in the service sector and improve overall customer service quality.

Companies should actively introduce and utilize various management measures (e.g., regular communication and employee support programs). Additionally, they must develop manuals for handling violent behavior and establish complaint-handling centers where employees can address work-related stress issues; this will significantly improve working environments.

Furthermore, considering persistent issues regarding verbal aggression, physical aggression, and sexual harassment, companies should consider assessing employees' tolerance levels in dealing with negative customer interactions and providing the necessary support. This support can not only enhance employees' sense of belonging but also empower them with the capability and resources to deal with difficult customers, thereby alleviating stress. Creating a supportive work environment and promoting employee accountability is important. But it is inappropriate to assign the complete responsibility of dealing with these issues to employees alone. Instead, companies should establish mechanisms for receiving customer complaints, thereby enabling the prompt understanding and proactive resolution of customer dissatisfaction. This approach helps maintain customer trust, enhances the relevant company's reputation, prevents more severe problems between customers and employees, and alleviates service personnel's stress.

5.4. Limitations and directions for future research

While this study has various innovative insights, but it contains a few limitations. First, data were collected using a questionnaire. However, since all the variables relied on self-assessments provided by the same individual, there is a possibility of common method bias. To mitigate this problem, future research should explore alternative data collection methods. For example, introducing measurement differences at different time points, or utilizing more refined measurement tools or formats to address item sequencing and questionnaire design.

Second, this study addressed only the negative impact of jay-customer behaviors (e.g., verbal aggression, physical aggression, and sexual harassment) on service personnel. Furthermore, it did not consider the impact of inappropriate behaviors from superiors or colleagues. Therefore, future research could take a more comprehensive approach by considering both jay-customer behavior and workplace misbehavior and exploring their impacts and interactions on service personnel. This would provide a more holistic understanding of the effects of different types of misbehavior on employee well-being and job performance and allow organizations to utilize

more effective intervention measures and management strategies.

Finally, the study data were collected using a questionnaire survey targeting service industry professionals. However, owing to a lack of questionnaires focusing on occupational categories, it was not possible for the current study to verify the differences across occupations. Therefore, future research should provide data collected with a focus on occupational categories in order to derive more diverse perspectives and conclusions.

Conflict of interest

The researcher claims no conflicts of interest.

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