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# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TASK AND CONTEXTUAL JOB PERFORMANCE AMONG MIDDLE MANAGERS IN THE MALAYSIAN ARMY

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<i>Article history:</i> Received <i>23-05-2019</i> Received in revised <i>17-01-2021</i> Accepted	The research was conducted to determine the different aspects of job performance among Senior Non-Commissioned Officers (SNCO), often mentioned as middle managers in the Malaysian Army. This study has identified that the job performance of the SNCOs in the combat element corps consists of task and contextual job performance. The quantitative approach was implemented, and the data consisting of 458 respondents were collected from soldiers of the rank of corporal and below, i.e. JNCOs from the combat element corps of the Malaysian Army in all geographic locations of Malaysia. The data analysis used was PLS-SEM to determine the
11-12-2021	acceptability of the data obtained with the hypothesised model of job performance. The ${\sf R}^2$
Available online 31-12-2021	value of 0.852 indicates that 85.2 % of job performance is predicted by task and contextual performance constructs. The results also support the hypothesis that task performance and
Keywords: Job Performance, Task Performance, Contextual Performance	contextual performance have a significant positive relationship with job performance among the SNCOs. This study established that both task and contextual job performance are of equal importance in determining the job performance of middle managers of the combat element of the Malaysian Army. Nevertheless, task performance is more significant compared to contextual performance.
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#### Introduction

The Malaysian Army outlined that the job performance of its soldiers is crucial in achieving the tasks and functions outlined in its mission charter. According to Hersey et al. (2001), work performance is arguably an essential criterion variable in occupational, industrial, and organisational psychology and human resource management, comparable to other companies in public and private sectors (HRM). Differing from the corporate setting is the way of military disciplinary environment whereby there is a need for soldiers to strive beyond what is expected of them in favour of accomplishing their responsibilities in the combat settings, i.e., beyond the call of duty which is distinctly described as their job performance (Malaysian Army, 2011). How teams can interact and organise activities in complex, high-stress, high-demand environments are the main challenge facing the working of military teams (Ivey & Kline, 2010). Researchers have been trying to create specific work performance metrics. This search was inspired by the need to leverage human resources efficiently to increase organisational efficiency (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2009; Guest, 2011). According to Ying & Tsung (2015). It is safe to say that success depends on good soldiers in the military organisation who, during combat situations, are frequently faced with life-or-death situations. They do not earn extra pay or bonuses based on merit or accomplishment. Hardy et al. (2010) noted that his personal and individual military competency and abilities forged into operating together as a team characterise the traditional essence of a soldier's duties in his professional competency. He said certain features and

commitments considered close behaviours that extend beyond the call of duty. According to Bartone (2010), their job requires them to undertake certain responsibilities and tasks considered voluntary tasks that are not assigned, sustaining the creativity and innovation ideas to enhance operations, and supporting peers and commanders with job-related duties. Such self-sacrifice is neither recommended nor required, but they provide the continued effectiveness of the organisation. According to Amna et al. (2015), such success is theorised to derive from a partnership between the employee and the organisation in social exchange. In the current study on the job performance of personnel in the Malaysian Army, the aspects mentioned above by the various authors are essential and of concern.

## Background

The need for improvement in the job performance of the SNCOs in the Malaysian Army has been asserted lately. Zulkifli (2014), the former Malaysian Chief of Army, said that the job performance in the Malaysian Army had not shown any distinguishing improvement, and as such, the Malaysian Army needs to go back to basics. Basic was referring to looking at the fundamentals of military performances in terms of basic soldiering, leadership style, basic skills in job performance and loyalty to the organisation. This observation was echoed by the Chief of the Malaysian Army when he mentioned that job performance among Noncommissioned officers needs to be improved as they act as an intermediary link between the officers and other ranks. Factors associated with improving job performance need to be relooked and investigated so that soldiers can perform their duties and assignments more effectively and efficiently, particularly in times of peace and war (Department of Human Resources, 2015). The measurement of job performance is the dealings with an individual against their goal, focusing on whether outcomes are commensurate with the expected goal (Thorndike, 1913). Nevertheless, the Malaysian Armed Forces and the Malaysian Army relates job performance to mission accomplishment (Malaysian Army, 2012). Unlike the abundance of literature available for the description of job performance in a non-military establishment, there is no specific document that describes job performance in the context of the Malaysian Army. Thus, there is a need to articulate the understanding of job performance from the military perspective, which can be initiated as a doctrine for the Malaysian Army.

#### **Research Objective**

Military job performance provides the anchor for all soldiers to be professional, especially in combat. Also, in peacetime, military success is correlated with stability and mutual adherence to organisational principles and priorities, according to Kane and Tremble (2010) and Shamir et al. (1998). In order to influence, motivate and encourage people to achieve the desired result in their work results, an influential leadership role is required. In order to identify the pertinent aspects of job performance for this study, the literature review looked into job performance among the other industries before narrowing down to the perspective in the Malaysian Army. In their conceptualisation, Borman and Motowildo (1993) said that managerial job performance metrics should concentrate on using the best available "objective" indicators of an employee's accomplishments.

Furthermore, Motowidlo and Schmit (1999), Borman and Brush (1993) conceived the job success of executives in their studies as a construct consisting primarily of task performance. The literature, however, also indicates that managers 'contextual success is also a significant contributor to organisational effectiveness (Butler & McEvoy, 2012; Nankervis et al. 2013). Importantly, Dierdorff et al. (2009) noted that similar empirical study experiments were performed at the same time to determine the contextual and function dimensions of managers' performance. There is a need to identify the variables of job performance prevalent in the military perspective, and the key variables that contribute to job performance in the Malaysian Army, especially among non-commissioned officers, need to be established.

Similarly, no research to date has assessed both managers' contextual and task output directly and simultaneously using downward field scores. Therefore, in previous research, there is a gap that this study can try to bridge in measuring job performance by using task and contextual performance as its components, particularly in the military environment.

#### **Conceptualising and Operationalising the Measure of Job Performance**

Many research and studies were done that looked at developing practical models that had addressed and identified the components of performance. For example, a pertinent study was done by the U.S. military on job performance in the military (Campbell et al., 1990). This research concluded that there are eight mechanisms of job performance, namely: "non-job-specific task expertise, job-specific task aptitude, written and oral communication task ability, demonstration of effort, continued personal discipline, enablement of peer and team performance, supervision/leadership and management/administration". In a subsequent study, Campbell et al. (1996) found that these job performance factors were not present in every job and comprised of other factors. However, the study concluded that those factors are evident for job performance in military settings for the military domain. Therefore, it is pertinent for the study of job performance among soldiers in the Malaysian Army that these job performance factors have to be considered during the instrument building for the survey questionnaire. Task job performance in military settings includes conducting tasks and meeting the duties and goals implied by the position and job. According to Amna et al. (2015), task job efficiency plays a significant direct link with the organisation's core mission and competence. For instance, the infantry section leader is supposed to be competent in his disguise, navigation, and execution of section-level drills and shooting. A pilot is projected to fly and destroy enemy targets with missiles/bombs. The totals of all the task performances of the team members contribute directly to combat or a war being won. The aspects of task performances could include the number of areas captured, or enemy kill achieved. As pointed out in the study by Chan, Soh and Ramaya (2011), these are the measurable outcomes that can be used to reflect the efficiency of a military organisation in accomplishing their operation or combat duties. Hence, the factors used in the previous studies are essential in deriving the components of job performance for the theoretical framework to analyse SNCO's job performance in the Malaysian Army setting.

Contextual performance is a behaviour that does not contribute directly to organisational performance but supports the organisational, social and psychological environment (Amna et al., 2015). Contextual performance varies because it involves tasks not formally part of the contextual performance (Parker et al., 2006; Sonnentag & Frese, 2002). It refers to a job not part of his job, task, or responsibility. It denotes the intention of a person to contribute to the organisation, which is often related to organisational citizenship behaviour (Organ, 1997). In clear understanding, Borman and Motowidlo (1993) said that the word "contextual performance" is about being aimed at people. It helps organisations reach their goals by encouraging individuals to go the extra mile to support others, although it is not part of their job requirements. Offers and volunteering for additional roles are some of the programs and provide recommendations to strengthen the company. Borman and Motowidlo (1993) have pointed out that not only does contextual success help the company achieve its central goal but contributes significantly to other important results, such as a productive working climate, low turnover, healthy recruiting, and creativity. In order to develop and maintain an organisation, these findings are essential. Therefore, contextual performance forms another aspect that could be conceptualised for this study on SNCO's job performance in the Malaysian Army.

# **Task Performance**

Borman and Motowidlo (1993, p.73) described task performance as "the proficiency with which job incumbents perform activities that are formally recognised as part of their jobs; activities that contribute to the organisation's technical core either directly by implementing a part of its technological process, or indirectly by providing it with needed materials or services". Additionally, task performance in itself can be described as a multi-dimensional construct. Based on the description of task performance above, these factors are helpful for instrument building for the component of task performance in the job performance survey questionnaire in the study of the SNCO in the Malaysian Army.

In military environments, task job performance involves performing tasks and fulfilling the duties and objectives indicated by the mission and objectives of combat duties. According to Amna et al. (2015), job performance plays a significant direct link with the organisation's mission purpose and competence. A soldier is expected to perform duties according to specific training, which will assist them in performing core functions such as shooting, navigational expertise, various drills and providing leadership for their comrades.

Project output elements could include the number of combat areas captured or destroyed by the enemy. These are the observable results, as pointed out in the study by Chan, Soh and Ramaya (2011), that can be used to represent the effectiveness of a military organisation in carrying out its organisational or combat duties. The factors used in previous studies are therefore essential in deriving the components of job performance from the theoretical context for evaluating the job performance of SNCO in the environment of the Malaysian Army.

# **Contextual Performance**

Contextual job performance is the activity that does not directly contribute to the company's performance but enhances the organisational, social and psychological environment (Amna et al. 2015). Contextual performance varies because it requires tasks not formally part of the contextual performance (Parker et al., 2006; Sonnentag & Frese, 2002). It refers to a job not part of his job, task or responsibility. It denotes the intention of a person to contribute to the organisation, which is often related to organisational citizenship behaviour (Organ, 1997). In clear understanding, Borman and Motowidlo (1993) said that the word "contextual performance" is about being aimed at people. It helps organisations reach their goals by encouraging individuals to go the extra mile to support others, although it is not part of their job requirements. Offers and volunteering for additional roles are some of the programs and provide recommendations to strengthen the company achieve its central goal but contributes significantly to other important results, such as a productive working climate, low turnover, healthy recruiting, and creativity. To develop and maintain an organisation, these findings are essential. Therefore, contextual performance forms another aspect that could be conceptualised for this study on SNCO's job performance in the Malaysian Army.

In the military context, such behaviour in contextual performance is described as teamwork; its role is beyond the call of duty and involves selfless dedication, bravery, commitment, and loyalty (Bartone,2010). Soldiers are expected to perform their core competency in their skills, and they are also required to work in unison as a team as operations are conducted in collective situations rather than individual performance. The need to work as a team to share all their competencies with fellow soldiers is the essence of a mission requirement in any operations, as highlighted by Chan, Soh and Ramaya (2011). Although there were studies done to identify the relationships of variables of job performance, there is no prior research conducted involving the type of job performance in the military comprising of the task or contextual performance. As pointed out by Fu and Deshpande (2014), both performances, i.e. task and contextual, plays a role in determining an individual's job performance, contributing to organisational performance that must be based on the military setting, specifically in the Malaysian Army environment, to enhance the body of knowledge regarding the job performance of soldiers. Table 1.1 shows the summary of job performance concepts and meaning and identified variables for conceptualising the constructs of job performance in the research.

Author	Concept And Meaning Of Job	Identified Variable of Job	
	Performance	Performance	
Thorndike (1913)	"Job performance measures an	Task and Contextual	
	individual against his or her goal, with	Performance	
	an emphasis on whether outcomes		
	match the expected goal"		
Organ (1977)	"The meaning of performance defined	Task Performance	
	narrowly as quantity of output or		
	quality of task performance might be		
	the reason that no relationship was		
	found between job satisfaction and job		
	performance".		
Hall & Goodale (1986).	"Job performance is how an employee	Task and Contextual	
	performs his or her tasks using time,	Performance	
	techniques and interactions with		
	others"		

Author	Concept And Meaning Of Job Performance	Identified Variable of Job Performance		
Schermerhorn (1989)	"Job performance represents the quantity and quality of work achieved by an individual or a group, stressing whether the task has been achieved effectively"	Task Performance		
Campbell, 1990; Campbell, 1999; Campbell, Gasser, & Oswald, 1996; Campbell <i>et</i> <i>al.</i> , 1993;	"The literature on definition and work- related studies on job performance is related to organisational behaviour"	Task and Contextual Performance		
Campbell <i>et al</i> . (1990)	"There are eight components of job performance in the military environment. - Non-Job-Specific Task Proficiency - Job-Specific Task Proficiency - Written and Oral Communication - Task Proficiency - Demonstration of Effort - Maintenance of Personal - Discipline - Facilitation of Peer And Team - Performance - Supervision/Leadership - management/Administration"	Task and Contextual Performance		
Smith (1982)	"Accurate measure of job performance is based on direct observation of behaviour"	Task and Contextual Performance		
Borman & Motowildo (1993)	"Job performance comprises of task and contextual performance. Task performance is the traditional in-role performance, which is the most basic component of performance appraisal; it directly assesses task outcomes and relates directly to work effectiveness that contributes to the organisation's technical core. Contextual performance may stem from personality traits and is unrelated to in-role expectations. Contextual activities include volunteering to carry out task activities not formally part of the job and helping and cooperating with others in the organisation to get tasks accomplished".	Task and Contextual Performance		
Campbell <i>et al</i> . (1993), Campbell (2003)	"Individual performance derives from actual behaviour that can be measured in terms of expertise rather than outcomes"	Task and Contextual Performance		
Murphy & Cleveland (1995)	"There are many judgment calls required when job performance is being operationalised and relies on apparently 'objective' measures such as behavioural counting, organisational records and the like"	Task and Contextual Performance.		
Campbell <i>et al</i> . (1996)	"The components of job performance are not present in every job and might comprise of other components. For the military domain these components are	Task and Contextual Performance		

Author	Concept And Meaning Of Job Performance	Identified Variable of Job Performance	
	evident for job performance such as working in teams and the spirit de corps"		
Mahoney(1998)	"Job performance as the productivity is described as the ratio of outputs relative to inputs into some production procedure"	Task and Contextual Performance	
Rotundo (2000)	"The main focus of job performance is on actions or behaviours of individuals not outcomes or results of these behaviours of actions"		
Viswesvaran & Ones (2000)	"Job performance comprises of work performances which are: applicable to organisational goals; within the individual's control; and quantifiable, i.e. apparent and noticeable".	Task and Contextual Performance	
Hough & Oswal (2001)	"Job performance is multifaceted and can be measured. It is itself complex, changes over time and situation, and consists of multiple magnitudes"	Task and Contextual Performance	
Hosie and Sevastos (2007)	Job performance as "the recent net contribution value to organisational effectiveness and goals, attained in conjunction with people, determined by events under managers' control, in a particular environment."	Task and Contextual performance	
(Amna <i>et al.</i> 2015)	"Contextual performance consists of behaviour that does not directly contribute to organisational performance but supports the organisational, social and psychological environment"	Contextual performance	

It can be seen that job performance hinges heavily on organisational behaviour, depicting the working environment (Leiter et al., 2013). The literature reviews pointed out that job performance is more accurately measured based on individual behaviours than results (outcomes) (Campbell, 2003). For this reason, it is necessary to differentiate job performance from other measures of performance which are sometimes used interchangeably, which has been proven to be mostly incorrect. Also, the environment plays an influencing role in determining an individual's job performance (Dixon et al., 1990). Therefore, this study must look at the variables and components of job performance that could affect their performance. Therefore, there is a void in previous studies that this study will attempt to fill by using task and contextual output as components in calculating job performance. The literature review found that the Social Exchange Theory (SET) is one of the most significant theories relating to current research on job performance in the Malaysian Army. The social exchange theory is the crucial theoretical research structure investigating extra-role behaviours and their contexts. Organ (1988) proposed that the essence of social interaction contributes to the assumption that if they consider equal treatment in the company, workers will perform in- and extra-role activities and go beyond their job requirements to meet perceived additional obligations. The SET proposes that social behaviour results from an exchange process (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Emerson (1976) said that there are different opinions of social exchange, but many theorists agree that many series of interactions generate obligations. This theory states that people weigh the potential benefits/rewards and risks of social relationships in determining whether to abandon their relationship.

#### **Research Methodology**

The survey was conducted in the four regional command divisions of the Malaysian Army, which are strategically located throughout all the East and West Malaysia states. The respondents for the research were taken across the geographic location of all four Malaysian Infantry Divisions in Malaysia. This research followed the quantitative method's methodology and adopted the theory of post-positivism as its methodological framework. Cross-sectional experiments using a questionnaire for data collection were included in the survey study. This instrument scale, based on Borman and Motowidlo (1993), was used by McAllister (1995) for task performance and Motowidlo and Van Scotter (1994) for contextual performance. To ensure the credibility of the research, this study conducted a preliminary data analysis from the pilot study to understand how the respondents reacted to the items in the questionnaire and establish how well the items were measured. The preliminary data analysis was conducted to determine the mean, the range, the standard deviation, and the variance in the data to establish: first, the range of the response to each item in the scale; second, biases in the survey question; third, whether the responses range is satisfactory, and fourth, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient scale that indicates how well the items in the questionnaire set are positively correlated to one another was used.

#### **Results and Discussions**

Some items in the survey questionnaire were omitted based on the pilot report, as their external loading results did not reach the threshold level of the Cronbach Alpha. Just 13 of the 30 survey items were used for the proper study of the 458 respondents. It was found from the outcome of the pilot study that some clarification, sequence of questions and use of scale needed adjustment and must be addressed in the actual study. The researcher was able to refine further the design of the items in the survey questionnaires for the actual survey based on these inputs. Before the actual survey, objects in the survey questionnaire were relabelled under their respective measurements and sub-dimensions. The relationship was investigated using the PLS-SEM path model based on path analysis. The PLS-SEM algorithm's outcomes are as shown in Figure 1. The R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.852 indicates that 85.2 % of job performance is predicted by task and contextual performance constructs. The results of the path coefficients indicate that task performance ( $\beta = 0.542$ ) contextual performance ( $\beta = 0.406$ ) and have positive relationships with job performance. The  $\beta$  values indicate that t contextual performance is a weaker indicator than task performance. Hence, the results support the hypothesis that task performance and contextual performance have a significant positive relationship with job performance among the SNCOs.

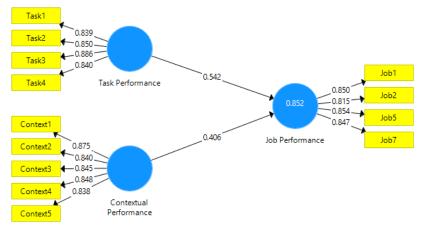


Fig. 1 - PLS Algorithm of Job Performance Model

Using bootstrapping, the ultimate test was carried out to assess the value of the coefficients. In Fig.2, the bootstrapping results produced the standard errors, and the empirical t values were calculated to determine if the coefficients were significant.

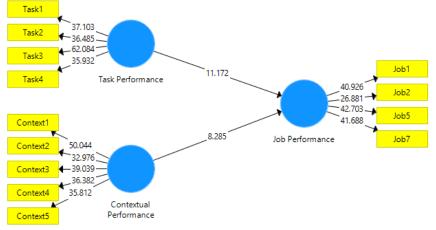


Fig. 2 - Bootstrapping results of the Job Performance model (>1.96)

Table 3 - Significance of the relationships between Task and Contextual Performance with Job Performance

Construct	Path Coefficient	t Value (>1.96)	Construct
Task Performance -> Job Performance	0.542	11.172	Significant
Contextual Performance-> Job Performance	0.406	8.285	Significant

Díaz-Vilela et al. (2015) explain that task and contextual performance are prominent in disciplined organisations such as the military and the police force as in most occasions, they have to do multi-tasking to protect others on the battlefield. The findings in Table 3 show that with a path coefficient of 0.542 and a t value of 11.172, which is > 1.96, task performance and job performance are important. Likewise, with a path coefficient of 0.406 and a t value of 8.285, which is >1.96, the association of contextual performance with job performance is also important. The finding is in line with the study conducted by Zheng-Xue Luo et al. (2008) that the job performance of Chinese military soldiers consisted of two dimensions of work performance and contextual performance, both task and contextual performance. Performance of the mission and contextual performance led to overall job performance independently.

The Importance-Performance Matrix Analysis (IPMA) was used to expand PLS-outcomes SEM's by taking each construct's performance to conclude its performance and the relative importance of constructs in describing other constructs in the job performance structural model. The extension was based on the PLS-SEM estimates of the relationships of the path model and introduced an additional dimension to the study that considers the average values of the latent variables (Hair et al., 2014). The IPMA contrasted the total impact (significance) of the job performance structural model and the average values of the latent variable scores (performance) to highlight important areas for enhancing SNCOs' job performance.

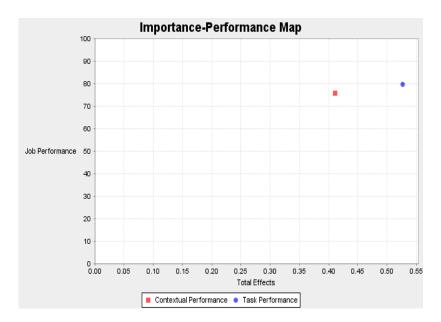


Fig. 3 IPMA of Job Performance Among Middle Managers in the Malaysian Army

IPMA compares the overall impact (importance) of the command environment structural model and the average values of the latent variable scores (performance) to highlight important areas for mission and contextual change to enhance the military unit's job performance. The latent variable/construct goal, job performance, has a value of 79.90. Contributing to the command climate ranking are mission success scores with a value of 89.90 and contextual performance with a value of 82.10. The relative performance of the three exogenous constructs is then headed by task performance and contextual performance followed. As shown in Figure 3, the development of an IPMA representation of the command climate model is in the form of a graph. The IPMA of job performance shows that mission and contextual job performance are of similar significance for the middle managers of the Malaysian Army's combat component to determine job performance. The IPMA of the job performance model offers additional knowledge that, while task and contextual job performance relate almost equally to job performance, task performance is of greater relative significance in the overall measure of the job performance model.

## Conclusion

This quantitative research provides the exclusive results that both task and contextual job performance has a significant correlation towards military job performance among SNCOs in the Malaysian Army. However, the results accredited that SNCOs are more significant towards task performance than contextual performance following the rigid chain of command and leadership in the Malaysian Army. It is also of paramount importance that this study investigates the components of job performance that must be based on the military setting, specifically in the Malaysian Army environment, to enhance the body of knowledge regarding the job performance of soldiers. Soldiers are dedicated to executing activities and accomplishing their responsibilities according to their appointment in the task and contextual performance. This is another critical indicator that soldiers also perform other duties and responsibilities, although they may not be formal. The soldiers carry out lawful command and order based on orders from their superiors. They also assist others in ensuring teamwork for increased job performance which contributes to overall high tempo performance in combat duties.

This study propagates the body of knowledge on the extent of the job performance of Senior Non-Commissioned Officers (SNCOs) in the Malaysian Army, often termed as the "middle managers". Both task and contextual job performance are pertinent to soldiers' operational and combat duties requirements. The leadership of the Malaysian Army should carve, review and update relevant and current military doctrines to complete the equation of strengths and weaknesses in their job performance

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