

The Influences of Coping, Hope, Optimism, and Psychological Stress on Service Performance: A Measurement Correlation Analysis

Stefanie Seli¹, Boo Ho Voon^{1*}, Noni Harianti Junaidi¹, Ai Kiat Teo²

¹ Universiti Teknologi MARA Sarawak Branch, 94300 Kota Samarahan, Malaysia

² SMK DPHA Gapor, Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia

*Corresponding Author: bhvoon@uitm.edu.my

Received: 17 December 2024 | Accepted: 19 January 2025 | Published: 15 February 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55057/ijbtlm.2025.7.1.20>

Abstract: *In the context of the local governments, this paper aims to investigate the relationships among coping, hope, optimism, psychological stress, service performance, and customer orientation. A questionnaire survey was conducted and 424 questionnaires were collected and analyzed. The goodness of measures was analyzed using the survey data. The correlation of the measurement scales and the item's international consistency were found to be satisfactory.*

Keywords: Local Authorities, Psychological Stress, Coping, Optimism, Service Performance

1. Introduction

Local governments are regarded as essential agencies that provide services to citizens. A critical element in this regard will be the quality of the services rendered by these agencies. Public sector organizations, such as local authorities, encounter specific challenges when assessing service quality. These challenges arise from their distinct organizational goals and the characteristics of the services they provide (Wisniewski & Donnelly, 1996). Even if adequate resources are assigned to deliver services, there will be no guarantee that these resources will be efficiently employed. It can arise due to insufficient expertise, limited financial capability, or a lack of openness and responsibility from service providers (Khale & Worku, 2013). Local government professionalism perceptions may be affected by disciplinary infractions, lack of integrity, inadequate competence, or performance delays (Dewi et al., 2020). Local government management must face future problems, such as managers needing a shifting skill set, varying decision-making processes, and the developing nature of service delivery (Reilly, 2014). Local governments control public expenditures and provide essential services (Mu, 2017). Local governments are responsible for providing various services to residents within their jurisdictional boundaries. As a result, local governments must improve their responsiveness to community needs and increase their capacity to meet their responsibilities. In addition, performance reviews are required to ensure constant delivery of high-quality services. Local governments justify the existence of significant financial investments by offering cutting-edge services that are rapid, effective, adequate, timely, and satisfactory.

2. Literature Review

Assessing the performance of local authorities in delivering services is a crucial focus of study and implementation in the field of public administration (Li & Dong, 2010). Local authorities must evaluate their service performance by utilizing a range of performance measures and considering stakeholders' opinions. The provision of services can vary significantly between urban and rural areas since authorities encounter difficulties distributing resources to ensure fair and equal access to services in all communities.

According to Colquitt (2011), service performance refers to how employee behaviours contribute to achieving favorable or bad organizational goals. Performance is the outcome of work closely aligned with the objectives of organizational strategy, customer happiness, and contributing positively to the economy. Performance refers to the execution of tasks and the outcomes obtained from those tasks (Armstrong, M. and Baron, A., 1998). The quality of service heavily influences customer happiness and trust. Neely, Adams, and Kenerley (2009) assert that performance measurement primarily emphasizes efficiency and efficacy. The evaluation also includes assessing organizational resources' effectiveness in meeting stakeholders' needs and expectations. Most local government service performance studies employed statistical methodologies to determine and evaluate consumer satisfaction and performance.

2.1 The Research Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research is illustrated in Figure 1. The association between coping, hope, and optimism, as well as psychological stress in the local governments of Sarawak employees, are investigated in this study. The method by which customer orientation modifies the relationship between service performance is also explored in this paper.

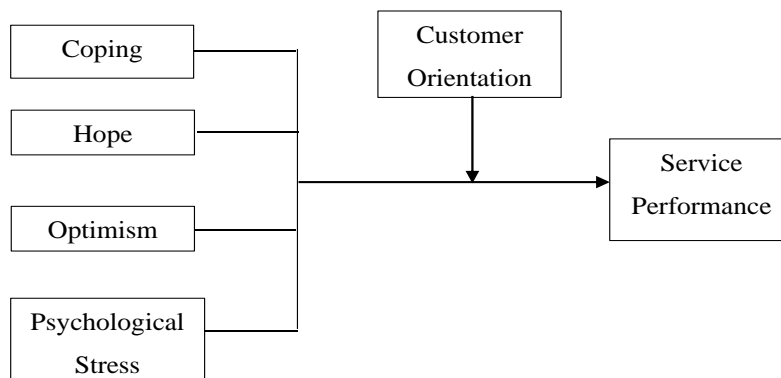


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a quantitative approach to answer the research objectives. Quantitative research is frequently employed in social science to examine the associations between variables, resulting in outcomes that possess prescriptive, explanatory, or confirmatory qualities (Williams, 2011). It is complemented by recommended practices such as item reductions and assessment of factor structures (Hair et al., 2010; Kaiser, 1974), followed by reliability and validation exercises (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Survey research is a method in which researchers send questionnaires to survey respondents. The survey data is then statistically analyzed to draw meaningful research conclusions. The quantitative survey

methodology uses questionnaires to collect data from a representative sample of Sarawak's local authority's employees. This study uses quota sampling. From an estimated 3,500 Sarawak local authority personnel, 500 of diverse genders, ages, employment positions, and departments were sampled. The present study applied the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) technique for path modelling and factor analysis of the constructs. SEM is a second-generation multivariate data analysis technique that allows the simultaneous modelling of relationships among multiple variables (Hair et al., 2014; 2017). The ability to test the links between multiple independent and dependent variables resembles the main advantage of the second-generation statistical analysis method. The researcher personally administered it to the respondents.

3.2 Instrument Development and Survey

A comprehensive list of items was generated in the literature reviews that would capture each of the domains of the construct. The purpose was to create item pools from the existing scales and create new items that appeared to fit the construct definitions. The final eighty-three (83) out of six (6) variables were identified, and this was initiated. The draft questionnaires included the introductory letter, demographic profile, coping, hope, optimism, psychological stress, service performance, customer orientation, and an emphasis on measure. The questionnaire is written in English and Malay and presented on the same rating scale. The questions were measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The draft questionnaire seeks expert advice from those with relevant backgrounds regarding scale dependability, content, and face validity (Sweeney & Soutar, 2014).

3.3 Sampling method

Quantitative research uses mathematical, computational, and statistical methods to find a cause-and-effect link between two factors. Ahmad et al. (2019) said the study is also called empirical research because it can be measured precisely. The researcher can sort the data into groups, rank it, or use units of measurement to figure out how big or small the data sets are. Selecting a subset of a population to serve as a representative sample is known as sampling (Mugo Fridah W., 2002). Thus, the appropriate method was used to select sample sizes to minimize the possibility of biased results. Therefore, sample size denotes the number of individuals that ought to be incorporated into the experimental study before initiating the investigation, as mentioned by Kirch (2008). The questionnaire surveys were distributed among the Sarawak local authorities employees. The study targeted 500 respondents from local authorities and employees in Sarawak. However, due to time constraints, the researcher managed to get 424 respondents for the questionnaire. The distribution of the questionnaire began on 6 February until 20 February 2024. The dependent variables were service performance. The respondents' coping, hope, optimism and psychological stress characteristics were considered independent variables.

4. Research Findings and Discussion

A total of four hundred twenty-four (424) respondents returned the survey. The researcher used Cronbach's Alpha measurement to indicate the level of correlation of each item or section in the questionnaires. Cronbach's alpha coefficient quantifies the degree of internal consistency and reliability of a set of survey items. A value of more than 0.7 indicates the questionnaire is reliable and based on the reliability analysis done, the Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.897. Thus, the results indicated all items measured were reliable for this study. The questionnaire's reliability was high, indicating strong internal consistency (Bujang et al, 2018).

The respondent profile was showed in **Table 1**. The majority were male respondents, which consists of 222 (52.4%), and female respondents were 200 (47.6%). For respondents, the majority age range of 36 – 35 years old is 23.6% (100) of the total number of respondents. For the length of work experience, majority respondent’s was age of 1 - 3 years indicates 20.5% (87). For the job category, most of the respondents' jobs are from support group 2, which indicates 49.1% (208). For marital status, most of the respondents are married, which indicates 56.1% (238). For the respondents' education level, the highest is Degree, which indicates 34.4% (146).

Table 1: Respondent's Profile

	Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	222	52.4
	Female	202	47.6
Age	25 years and below	76	17.9
	26 - 30 years	59	13.9
	31 - 35 years	66	15.6
	36 - 40 years	100	23.6
	41 - 45 years	17	4.0
	46 – 50 years	59	13.9
	51 – 55 years	45	10.6
	56 years and above	2	0.5
Length of work	1 – 3 years	87	20.5
	4 – 6 years	81	19.1
	7 – 9 years	67	15.8
	10 – 12 years	82	19.3
	13 – 15 years	43	10.1
	16 – 18 years	28	6.6
	More than 18 years	36	8.5
Job Category	Professional and Management	76	17.9
	Support Group 1	140	33.0
	Support Group 2	208	49.1
Marital Status	Single	140	33.0
	Married	238	56.1
	Divorced/Separate	46	10.8
Highest Education	SPM	112	26.4
	STPM	34	8.0
	Diploma	90	21.2
	Degree	146	34.4
	Master	42	9.9

The correlation coefficient shows that the strength of the linear relationship and the directions between variables. If the correlation coefficient is positive, then the two variables have a unidirectional relationship (Purwanto et al, 20200. This means that if the value of the variable is high, then the value of the variable Y will be high as well. Conversely, if the correlation coefficient is negative, then the two variables have a inverse relationship. This means that if the value of the variable X is high, then the value of the variable Y will be low and vice versa. According to Hair et al (2017) to make it easier to interpret the strength of the relationship between two variables, the following criteria are provided:

- 0 means There is no correlation between two variables.
- >0.00 – 0.25 means the correlation is very weak.
- >0.25 – 0.50 means enough correlation.
- >0.50 – 0.75 means strong correlation.
- >0.75 – 0.99 means the correlation is very strong.
- 1.00 means perfect correlation.

Correlation analysis shows in **Table 2** revealed significant relationships among key variables, particularly between Optimism and Customer Orientation ($r=0.785$, $p < 0.01$) and Coping and Optimism ($r=0.828$, $p < 0.01$). These findings underscore the critical role of coping, hope, optimism and psychological stress in promoting service performance through customer orientation. Employees who use positive coping strategies, such as problem-focused coping or emotional regulation, are more resilient and can maintain high performance even in challenging situations. This connection is well-supported by research in organizational behaviour and psychology, highlighting the importance of coping for sustained job performance in service roles. According to Luthans et al. (2006) state that hope, which is a component of psychological capital, makes a significant contribution to job performance by virtue of its ability to generate resilience and motivation. There is a correlation between employees who have high levels of hope, improved service quality and customer happiness. Employees who have high levels of hope are better equipped to face problems and remain focused on reaching their goals.

Optimism is strongly linked to improved service performance. Optimistic employees approach challenges positively, enhancing their ability to cope with stress and maintain motivation. This positivity helps them engage better with customers, recover quickly from setbacks, and consistently deliver high-quality service. Research supports that optimism, as a component of psychological capital, is associated with higher job performance and satisfaction, particularly in service-oriented roles (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007). Psychological stress negatively impacts service performance by impairing cognitive functions, leading to emotional exhaustion, increasing absenteeism, and damaging customer interactions. Managing stress is essential to ensure that employees remain effective, engaged, and capable of delivering high-quality service. Highlight the connection between occupational stress and job performance, emphasizing the challenges employees face in service roles where emotional labour is critical (Sonnetag & Frese (2003)). Customer orientation with a customer-oriented culture often has more engaged employees motivated to deliver high-quality service. The employee commitment can positively influence service performance metrics such as response times, accuracy, and customer satisfaction. Customer orientation fosters a culture of innovation and adaptation. Companies prioritizing customer needs are more likely to develop new services or modify existing ones to meet better-evolving customer expectations, thereby boosting service performance.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

	CO	HO	OPT	PS	SP	CO x C	CO x HO	CO x OPT	CO x PS
C	0.786***	0.863***	0.853***	-0.617***	0.802***	-0.455***	-0.376***	-0.375***	0.310***
CO		0.767***	0.785***	-0.646***	0.913***	-0.494***	-0.483***	-0.463***	0.404***
HO			0.887***	-0.565***	0.797***	-0.354***	-0.360***	-0.361***	0.244***
OPT				-0.578***	0.794***	-0.379***	-0.388***	-0.449***	0.289***
PS					-0.636***	0.237***	0.198***	0.218***	-0.442***
SP						-0.450***	-0.455***	-0.449***	0.335***
CO x C							0.861***	0.828***	-0.559***
CO x HO								0.900***	-0.518***
CO x OPT									-0.526***

5. Recommendations

Promote cooperation among government agencies, non-profit organizations, and private sector partners to exchange resources, knowledge, and proven methods to enhance service delivery. Strengthen worker satisfaction and public service motivation by fostering a robust public interest culture and promoting a sense of civic duty among personnel. It can result in enhanced organizational performance and increased job satisfaction. Execute strategic initiatives to improve internal management practices to promote citizen happiness and optimize service delivery. Strategic methods may involve reorganizing, streamlining processes, and fostering a culture focused on achieving high organizational performance. It benefits future academics who want to investigate more service performance and customer orientation in local governments. A local government that is more customer-oriented is receiving more attention. There is a growing focus on local government prioritizing client satisfaction. In addition, this paper will facilitate the transformation of current local authority services into globally recognized services that prioritize effective and efficient service delivery.

6. Conclusion

Considering stakeholder viewpoints is essential for evaluating service performance. Service performance improvement requires systematic and trustworthy feedback collection. The empirical results, and analysis findings using the responses from 424 respondents, suggested that the internal consistency of the variables is satisfactory. Hence, the variables are reliable. The findings indicate that coping, hope, optimism and psychological stress are the potential to leverage service performance.

Acknowledgements

This research received no financing from public, commercial, or not-for-profit entities.

References

- Abdul Khalid, S. N. (2010). Improving the service delivery: A case study of local authority in Malaysia. *Global Business Review*, 11(1), 65–77
- Achdut, N., & Refaeli, T. (2020). Unemployment and Psychological Distress among Young People during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Psychological Resources and Risk Factors. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 17(19), 7163. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17197163>
- Adams, D., Mooi, A. N. Y., & Muniandy, V. (2020). Principal leadership preparation towards high-performing school leadership in Malaysia. *Asian Education and Development Studies*, 9(4), 425-439. <https://doi.org/10.1108/AEDS-02-2018-0046>
- Armstrong, M. and Baron, A. (1998). *Performance Management - The New Realities*. London: Institute of Personnel and Development.
- Arvidsdotter, T., Marklund, B., Kylén, S., Taft, C., & Ekman, I. (2016). Understanding persons with psychological distress in primary health care. *Scandinavian journal of caring sciences*, 30(4), 687-694.
- Bailey D. & Stewart J. (2006) Uncertainty in illness theory, Sixth edition. In *Nursing Theorists and Their Work* (Tomey A.M. & Alligood M.R., eds), Mosby Elsevier, St.Louis, Missouri, pp. 623-643.
- Bailey E.H., Perez M., Aft R.L., Liu Y., Schootman M. & Jeffe D.B. (2010) Impact of multiple caregiving roles on elevated depressed mood in early-stage breast cancer patients and same-age controls. *Breast Cancer Research and Treatment* 121(3), 709- 718.
- Bolger, N., & Schilling, E. A. (1991). Personality and the Problems of Everyday Life: The Role of Neuroticism in Exposure and Reactivity to Daily Stressors. *Journal of Personality*, 59(3), 355–386. <https://doi:10.1111/j.1467-6494.1991.tb00253.x>
- Boyle, G. J. (1991). Does item homogeneity indicate internal consistency or item redundancy in psychometric scales. *Personality & Individual Differences*, 12(3), 291- 294
- Carver, C. S., & Scheier, M. F. (2002). Optimism. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 231-243). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Carver, C. S., Scheier, M. F., & Segerstrom, S. C. (2010). *Optimism. Clinical Psychology Review*, 30(7), 879-889.
- Cheah, Y. K., Azahadi, M., Phang, S. N., & Abd Manaf, N. H. (2020). Sociodemographic, Lifestyle, and Health Factors Associated with Depression and Generalized Anxiety Disorder among Malaysian Adults. *Journal of primary care & community health*, 11, 2150132720921738.
- Colquitt, J. A. (2011). *Organizational Behavior: Improving Performance and Commitment in the Workplace. (2nd Edition)*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Corn B. W., Feldman D. B., Wexler I. (2020). The science of hope. *Lancet Oncol.* 21, e452–e459.
- DeVellis, R. (2003), *Scale Development: Theory and Applications*, 2nd ed., Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Dewi, N. K., Warsono, H., & Dwimawanti, I. H. (2020). Performance analysis of the Regional Civil Service Agency of the Rembang District. *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Administrasi Publik/Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Administrasi Publik*, 10(2), 439. <https://doi.org/10.26858/jiap.v10i2.15475>
- Duy, B., & Yildiz, M. A. (2017). The mediating role of self-esteem in the relationship between optimism and subjective well-being. *Current Psychology*, 36(3), 410–416. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-017-9698-1>

- Gallagher, M. W., & Lopez, S. J. (2009). Positive expectancies and mental health: Identifying the unique contributions of hope and optimism. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 4(6), 548-556.
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2010). *Multivariate Data Analysis (7th Edition)*. Pearson, New York.
- Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., Sarstedt, M., & Thiele, K. O. (2017). Mirror, mirror on the wall: A comparative evaluation of composite-based structural equation modeling methods. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 45(5), 616–632. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-017-0517-x>
- Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C., & Sarstedt, M. (2017). *A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727x.2015.1005806>
- Hamid, S. M. B. A., Hamali, J., & Abdullah, F. (2016). Performance measurement for local authorities in Sarawak. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.05.416>
- Howitt, D. & Cramer, D. (2005). Introduction to SPSS in Psychology for SPSS 10, 11, 12 and 13 (3rd ed.). London: Pearson Education Limited.
- Huang, L. C. (2016). High performance work systems, employee well-being, and job involvement: An empirical study. *Personnel Review*, 45(2), 296-314
- Ismail, M., Lee, K. Y., Sutrisno Tanjung, A., Ahmad Jelani, I. A., Abdul Latiff, R., Abdul Razak, H., & Ahmad Shauki, N. I. (2020). The prevalence of psychological distress and its association with coping strategies among medical interns in Malaysia: A national-level cross-sectional study. *Asia-Pacific Psychiatry*, e12417.
- Kline, P. (1986). *A handbook of test construction: Introduction to psychometric design*. London: Methuen.
- Krafft A. M., Guse T., Maree D. (2021). Distinguishing perceived hope and dispositional optimism: theoretical foundations and empirical findings beyond future expectancies and cognition. *J. Well-being Assess.* (2021) 2021:1–21.
- Li, X., & Dong, J. (2010). The Impact of Socioeconomic, Organizational and Individual Factors on Government Organizational Performance: Evidence from China.
- Local government in Malaysia - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Local_government_in_Malaysia
- Long K. N., Kim E. S., Chen Y., Wilson M. F., Worthington E., Jr, VanderWeele T. J. (2020). The role of hope in subsequent health and well-being for older adults: an outcome-wide longitudinal approach. *Global Epidemiol.* 2,100018. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloepi.2020.100018>
- MLGCD, (2015). *Sarawak Local Authorities Annual Budget Book*. Ministry of Local Government and Community Development, Sarawak.
- Mohamed Irfann, I. & Tan, T.H. (2011). Identifying Work-Related Stress among Employees in the Malaysian Financial Sector. *World Journal of Management*, 3(2), 229-243.
- Mohd, S. A. K., Azniza, I., & Rosnah, I. (2018). A review of occupational stress prevalence and its predictors among selected working populations in Malaysia. *Malaysian Journal of Public Health Medicine*, 18(2), 1-6.
- Mugo Fridah W. (2002). Sampling in Research. Retrieved from: http://www.indiana.edu/educy520/sec5982/week_2/mugo02sampling.pdf.
- Mzni, L. (2011). *The Relationship between Accountability and Customer Satisfaction in Sedibeng District Municipality, South Africa*. Moscow, Rusia: Public Management and Administration School of Basic Sciences.
- Nunnally, J.C. and Bernstein, I.H. (1994), *Psychometric Theory*, 3rd ed., McGraw-Hill Inc., New York, NY.

- Padrón, I., Fraga, I., Vieitez, L., Montes, C., and Romero, E. (2021). A Study on the Psychological Wound of COVID-19 in University Students. *Front. Psychol.* 12:589927. <http://doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2021.589927>
- Paul, J. M. (2016). Impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in private and public sector banks. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 34(5), 606–622. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJBM-03-2015-0030>
- Peterson, C., & Chang, E. C. (2003). Optimism and flourishing. In C. L. M. Keyes & J. Haidt (Eds.), *Flourishing: Positive psychology and the life well-lived* (p. 55–79). *American Psychological Association*.
- Potluri, R. M. (2016). A structural compendium on service quality and customer satisfaction A survey of banks in India. *Journal of Transnational Management*, 21(1), 12-28.
- Romswinkel, E. V., König, H. H., & Hajek, A. (2018). The role of optimism in the relationship between job stress and depressive symptoms. Longitudinal findings from the German Ageing Survey. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 241, 249-255.
- Schneiderman, N., Ironson, G., & Siegel, S. D. (2005). Stress and health: psychological behavioral, and biological determinants. *Annual review of clinical psychology*, 1, 607–628. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.clinpsy.1.102803.144141>
- Shaughnessy, J.J. & Zechmeister, E.B. (1997). *Research methods in psychology* (4th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Sureshchandar, G.S., Rajendran, C. and Anantharaman, R.N. (2001), "A holistic model for total quality service," *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, Vol. 12 No. 4, pp. 378-412.
- Sweeney, J. C., & Soutar, G. N. (2014). The development of multiple item scale. *Journal of Business and Management*, 77(2), 203-220.
- Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2007). Multivariate analysis variance and covariance. *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 3, 402-407.
- The Star (2016, 18 May). Vital to Manage Work-related Stress, Advises Lee. Retrieved from <http://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2016/05/18/vitalto-manageworkrelated-stress-advises-lee/>
- Voon, BH and Kueh, K. (2004), "Critical service requirements for a market-oriented university: a Malaysian case," *Refereed Proceedings of the SEAAIR Conference 2004*, Wenzhou, China
- Wisniewski, M., & Donnelly, M. (1996). Measuring service quality in the public sector: The potential for SERVQUAL. *Total Quality Management*, 7(4), 357–366. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09544129650034710>
- Wong, J. G., Cheung, E. P., Chan, K. K., Ma, K. K., and Wa Tang, S. (2006). Web-based survey of depression, anxiety and stress in first-year tertiary education students in Hong Kong. *Aust. N. Z. J. Psychiatry* 40, 777–782. <https://doi:10.1080/j.1440-1614.2006.01883.x>