Deviant Workplace Behaviors in Organizations in Pakistan

Maimoona Waseem[*]

Abstract

While employees bring their own set of values and attitudes to the workplace, companies that adopt a positive approach toward their employees are likely to be more productive. Employee misbehavior and workplace deviance can have a severe impact on overall organizational performance and productivity, with a corresponding increase in costs. The literature indicates that deviant behaviors include stress, violence, sexual harassment, employee hostility and organizational injustice. This study examines the extent of organizational and interpersonal deviance at a private sector firm in Pakistan, in which a sample of 50 employees were asked to rate deviant workplace behaviors. The independent variables include leader mistreatment, employee hostility, organizational sabotage, intention to quit, and political and production deviance. The study finds a significant relationship between workplace deviance and most of these variables.

Keywords: workplace deviance, employee hostility, production deviance, job satisfaction, leader mistreatment.

JEL classification: M19.

1. Introduction

Deviant behavior can be described as any activity that violates the rules, regulations and norms of a particular organization. The literal meaning of deviance is that which differs from what most people would consider acceptable (Durrat, Amyx & Bennett, 2010). At an organizational level, deviance could include the use of abusive language or physical violence and attempts to humiliate a colleague (Greenberg & Baron, 2007). While most organizations try to create a healthy work atmosphere that encourages teamwork and maximizes productivity, there may be situations in which employers or employees engage voluntarily in deviant behavior. This has a detrimental effect on the organization as a whole (Liu & Ding, 2012) and makes it more difficult for the firm to meet its targets.

[*] Research Associate, Operations and Supply Chain Department, University of Management and Technology.

While the phenomenon of deviant workplace behavior is not new, globalization, flexible technological environments, increased competition, workplace stress and materialism have all increased the incidence of deviant workplace behavior. This, in turn, affects employees' morale and their drive to excel, making it important to examine and resolve the issue. This study examines the extent of organizational and interpersonal deviance at a private sector firm in Pakistan, in which a sample of 50 employees were asked to rate deviant workplace behaviors, including leader mistreatment, employee hostility, organizational sabotage, intention to quit, and political and production deviance.

2. Literature Review

Workplace deviance is defined by Litzky, Eddleston and Kidder (2006) as "abnormal" or antisocial behavior on the part of an employer or employee. From an organizational perspective, this includes unwillingness to comply with a firm's values and rules as well as aggression and retaliation at the workplace.

This study uses Robinson and Bennet's (1995) definition of workplace deviance, which has served as a comprehensive framework for numerous subsequent studies. The authors divide workplace deviance into two broad categories: organizational and interpersonal deviance. Under this typology, organizational deviance includes acts such as sabotage or theft of a company's assets, and behavior such as an unwillingness to work or to meet targets and deadlines. Interpersonal deviance includes instances such as blaming another coworker without reason, or physically or verbally abusing a colleague. Key factors that relate to employee deviance include absenteeism, high turnover and withholding efforts (Oh, Lee, Ashton & de Vries, 2011). While most studies determine the causes of such behaviors and discuss their importance relative to other factors, Robinson and Bennet (1995) integrate deviant behaviors into a single framework.

Various studies show that factors such as stress, job commitment, organizational sabotage and leader mistreatment are strongly and positively related with workplace deviance (see Walsh, 2014). Duffy, Ganster and Pagon (2002) examine the causes and effects of deviant workplace behaviors in a sample of manufacturing firms. In another study, Ambrose, Seabright and Schminke (2002) highlight the relationship between injustice and organizational sabotage. Nasir and Bashir (2012) look at the level of deviance in the public sector in Pakistan. However, Bolin and Heatherly (2001) believe that much of the research does not address the relationship between employee deviance and personality or attitudes.

Workplace deviance occurs in almost every organization. The literature examines the role of political and production deviance, leader mistreatment, employee hostility, organizational sabotage and stress in deviant workplace behaviors (Chen, Chen & Liu, 2013). Many authors conclude that this area needs further research to help firms create better working environments for their employees. Deviant workplace behavior may be related to employee stress, which ultimately affects the firm's productivity and returns. Furthermore, as employee turnover increases, organizations may lose their position and status in the market. This underscores the importance of addressing workplace deviance (Palo & Chawla, 2015).

3. Rationale for Job Satisfaction

In examining workplace deviance, we need to take into account its relationship with job satisfaction. Good human resource management means ensuring that employees are satisfied with their jobs, which in turn makes them more productive to the advantage of the organization. This entails gauging the relationship between staff and the nature or content of their work (Liu & Ding, 2012). Emotion is central to workplace deviance in that job dissatisfaction can give rise to aggression and negativity among employees (Spector, Fox & Domagalski, 2006).

Greenberg and Baron (2007) suggest that job satisfaction is an attitude: employees will weigh the actual outcomes of their job against their expectations. Vogelsmeier, Halbesleben and Scott-Cawiezell (2008) show that job satisfaction contributes to positive behavior among employees. On the other hand, low job satisfaction has negative implications for the organization, including a decline in returns, increased overheads and high turnover (Zeffane, Ibrahim & Al Mehairi, 2008). Studies such as Marcus and Schuler (2004) and Marcus et al. (2016) find that job satisfaction plays a major role in workplace deviance.

Durrat et al. (2010) show that lower levels of job satisfaction are correlated with higher levels of workplace deviance: dissatisfied employees are more likely to retaliate against their colleagues and employers. The nature of a job can have a significant impact on staff attitudes, making it necessary for employers to prioritize their employees' quality of work-life. Human resource managers must, therefore, understand exactly how the firm's work environment functions, which recruits will fit best and how to overcome any communication gaps that might hinder the relationship between the firm and the employee. This is especially important given the

nature of competition not only among firms, but also among employees at the same firm. An organization's competitive advantage may lie in attracting and retaining competent, committed employees.

From the perspective of the employee, job satisfaction leads to a better relationship with one's coworkers, a long-term relationship with the organization, reduced stress and anxiety, and opportunities for advancement based on greater trust. A cross-sectional survey conducted by Nasir and Bashir (2012) – based on a sample of 100 employees from the government sector in Pakistan – shows that job satisfaction contributes inversely to about 80.2 percent of the variance in workplace deviance. This implies that lower levels of job satisfaction result in higher workplace deviance.

This study assesses the effects of job satisfaction, given its significance in the literature on workplace deviance and in the context of work-related stress and anxiety. Sims (2002) reports that employees who are highly satisfied with their jobs are less likely to engage in workplace deviance, and more likely to remain committed to the rules, regulations and norms set by their organization.

We expect job satisfaction to be negatively associated with workplace or employee deviance. This is tested across five areas (pay, supervisors, coworkers, advancement opportunities and benefits), with each response rated on a scale of 0–4 (0 = "very dissatisfied" and 4 = "very satisfied"). This helps determine the factors associated with deviant workplace behavior. Based on Robinson and Bennet's (1995) determinants of workplace deviance – organizational sabotage, political and production deviance, intention to quit, leader mistreatment, stress and job satisfaction – this study proposes the following hypotheses (see Figure 1):

- H1: individuals who are mistreated by their leaders engage in deviant workplace behaviors.

- H2: the prevalence of organizational sabotage leads to employee deviance in the organization.

- H3: employees who are satisfied with their jobs are less likely to engage in deviant workplace behaviors.

- H4: political deviance among employees increases deviant workplace behaviors.

Figure 1: Research framework
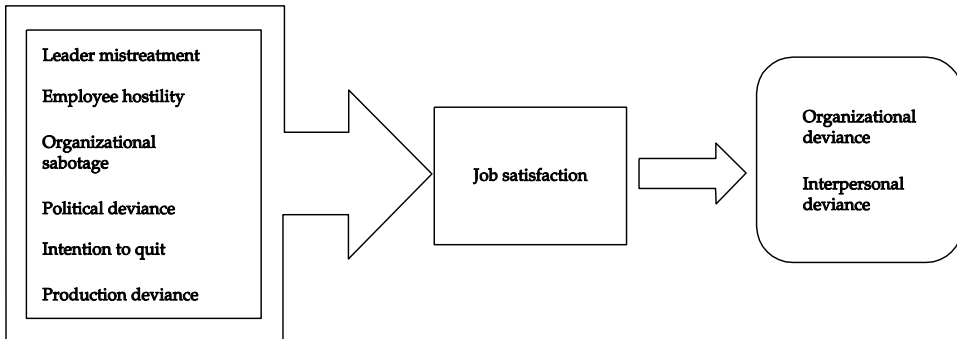
4. Methodology and Variables

The overall study has a quantitative and a qualitative component. The first part entailed gathering primary data for quantitative analysis. A sample of 50 employees working at a private organization in Lahore were asked to complete a questionnaire adapted from Robinson and Bennet (1995). The respondents represented a range of job levels, incomes and qualifications. Although the questionnaire was tailored to determine the level of deviance prevalent in the organization, it was deemed a credible instrument, given that it was based on Robinson and Bennet's (1995) well-established framework. Each variable being tested was rated on a Likert scale. Respondents were allowed to remain anonymous, given the sensitivity of the topic and to ensure the integrity of the data. Participants were told they could withdraw at any point if they were reluctant to respond.

The second part of the study entailed in-depth interviews with the organization's managers: although 15 senior managers were contacted, only five agreed to participate. In addition to thematic questions, they were asked to provide information on gender, marital status, educational qualifications, job contract, income range and current designation.

Following Robinson and Bennett (1995), the dependent variable, deviant workplace behavior, was measured using five independent variables (political deviance, production deviance, intention to quit, organizational sabotage and leader mistreatment) and one control variable (job satisfaction). Each variable was tested on the basis of four or five different questions to ensure reliable results.

5. Data Analysis and Discussion

This section presents the quantitative and qualitative results of the study.

5.1. Quantitative Analysis

Hypothesis H1 proposes that individuals or employees who have been mistreated by their leaders are likely to engage in workplace deviance. The literature supports the view that leader mistreatment and deviant workplace behaviors are positively correlated with one another. In the regression analysis, the leader mistreatment variable has a significance level of 0.034, which is less than 0.05. This implies that it has a strong and significant relationship with deviant workplace behavior. Thus, we reject the null and accept H1.

Hypothesis H2 states that organizational sabotage is associated with employee workplace deviance. The results show that organizational sabotage has a significance value of 0.020, which is less than 0.05. This confirms that the variable is significantly and positively correlated with workplace deviance. If organizational sabotage increases, there will be a corresponding rise in workplace deviance. This is consistent with previous studies. Therefore, we reject the null and accept H2.

Hypothesis H3 concerns job satisfaction as a control variable: the higher the level of job satisfaction, the smaller will be the likelihood of workplace deviance, that is, we expect a negative relationship between the two variables. The results indicate a significance value of 0.021 for job satisfaction. As determined by previous studies, the two variables should have a negative relationship: employees who are happy with their jobs in terms of salary, coworkers, supervisors, advancement opportunities and benefits are less likely to engage in deviant acts. Since the relationship is significant, we reject the null and accept H3.

Hypothesis H4 suggests that political deviance – in this case, instances of nepotism, disharmony among colleagues and unhealthy competition – results in increased workplace deviance. When tested, we find that this factor has a significant and positive relationship with workplace deviance, with a significance value of 0.016. This is closest to 0.000, implying that it is strongly correlated with workplace deviance.

Table 1 gives the regression results for the independent variables being tested. Overall, there is a significant relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

Table 1: Regression results for separate independent variables

	Dependent variable = workplace deviance		
Independent variable	**Significance level**	**Beta value**	**R2**
Leader mistreatment	0.034	0.169	0.113
Employee hostility	0.040	0.167	0.111
Organizational sabotage	0.020	0.015	0.000
Political deviance	0.016	0.053	0.154
Intention to quit	0.033	0.085	0.148
Production deviance	0.012	0.189	0.127
Job satisfaction	0.021	-0.526	0.107

Source: Author's calculations.

In a multiple regression analysis, the R-squared term indicates the level of variability of the dependent variable. In this model, the variability of workplace deviance is 4.5 percent, with 95.5 percent of the variability being accounted for by the independent variables. The overall model is significant as the collective significance level of all the independent variables is 0.0381 (3.81 percent), which is less than 0.05. Therefore, these variables play an important role in explaining the variations in workplace deviance.

Table 2 gives beta values for the independent variables. A positive beta indicates that the variable moves in the same direction as the dependent variable, that is, they are positively correlated. Job satisfaction, as a control variable, has the only negative beta, indicating that there is an inverse relationship between workplace deviance and job satisfaction. All the values are significant at the 0.01 level. Apart from job satisfaction, all the other variables have positive beta values.

Table 2: Regression results for multiple independent variables

	Dependent variable = workplace deviance
Independent variable	**Beta value**
Leader mistreatment	0.265
Employee hostility	0.240
Organizational sabotage	0.882
Political deviance	0.110
Intention to quit	0.104
Production deviance	0.140
Job satisfaction	-0.369

Note: Adjusted R-squared = 0.055.
Source: Author's calculations.

Table 3 confirms the reliability of the findings using Cronbach's alpha values. In this case, the alpha value is 0.84 or 84 percent, which falls in the acceptable range of 0.74 to 0.94.

Table 3: Individual Cronbach's alphas

Variable	**Cronbach's alpha**
Leader mistreatment	0.81
Employee hostility	0.63
Organizational sabotage	0.81
Political deviance	0.66
Intention to quit	0.72
Production deviance	0.74
Job satisfaction	0.82
Output value for all independent variables	0.84

Source: Author's calculations.

5.2. *Qualitative Analysis*

The five managers interviewed as part of the qualitative analysis were all male with an average age of 44 years. The purpose of these interviews was to assess workplace deviance from the perspective of senior management. Participants were asked whether they felt they had been mistreated and, if so, in what sense. They were also asked to describe how they had responded in such situations.

Most respondents replied that they had taken company property without authorization, although some said that employee deviance was relatively rare in the organization. Most of the answers were biased even though respondents were assured their answers would remain confidential. The human resources manager reported that deviance tended to increase when salary increments were being announced because employees were curious to find out what their colleagues had received.

Respondents were asked to describe how they had reacted to instances of perceived mistreatment:

- "Initially, I would get really upset at being scolded in front of my coworkers by my boss, but now I just say "Okay" and don't utter any word in response. Jobs are difficult to get in these times and I am the only breadwinner in my family."

- "When we see him [the director] coming or are told by our manager that the director will be paying a visit today or tomorrow, we act as though we are very busy, even if we are doing nothing. Our boss is hyperactive and insults everyone in front of others. Therefore, we pretend to be working hard so that he can't pin the blame on anyone."

- "I know there is no point in arguing when I am in a no-win situation. Therefore, I focus on my work and don't interfere in other people's matters."

6. Conclusion

Workplace deviance, particularly in services-based organizations, can be detrimental to the firm's performance (Chen et al., 2013). It incurs a direct cost when employees engage in unproductive behavior or damage firm property. Its indirect costs include preventing customers from receiving good service or dampening the morale of coworkers (Sady, Spitzmuller & Witt, 2008). In order to prevent workplace deviance, firms need to have a clear understanding of what drives this phenomenon. This study contributes to good managerial practices by investigating the relationship between job satisfaction and workplace deviance (Christian & Ellis, 2011).

In practice, managers must gauge what drives employee deviance and attempt to manage their employees and workplace more effectively. Service-oriented firms should monitor their clients' level of satisfaction (Durrat et al., 2010). Managers and supervisors must try and create a

positive work environment for their employees to discourage workplace deviance (Nasir & Bashir, 2012). The present study suggests that job satisfaction is a key determinant in reducing workplace deviance.

The literature argues that it is necessary for employees to abide by the norms and rules of their organization. Failure to do so carries not only financial risk, but also compromises organizational integrity (Robbins & Galperin, 2010). This means addressing both individual as well as organizational factors that can lead to employee deviance in this context.

Rather than simply screening individual employees for potentially undesirable traits, organizations should focus on creating a fair work environment that prevents such behavior by providing their employees with "sociocultural support and access to information" (Robbins & Galperin, 2010). Just procedures, "equitable outcome distributions" and respect for employees increases their "perceptions of justice" (Robbins & Galperin, 2010). It is worth noting that the present study underscores the substantial difference in working environments in Pakistan compared to the West in the context of factors determining workplace deviance. However, further research is needed to examine and address the issue.

Our results show that all the variables tested have a positive effect on workplace deviance, except for job satisfaction. These results are consistent with the literature, although this does not rule out the need for further Pakistan-specific research. Future research should examine steps to lower workplace deviance among employees, provide them with safer and better work environments, and increase job satisfaction. Finally, this could also include exploring other methodologies to address these variables and provide optimal solutions.

References

Ambrose, M., Seabright, M., & Schminke, M. (2002). Sabotage in the workplace: The role of organizational injustice. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *89*, 947–965.

Bolin, A., & Heatherly, L. (2001). Predictors of employee deviance: The relationship between bad attitudes and bad behavior. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, *15*(3), 405–418.

Chen, C.-C., Chen, M. Y., & Liu, Y.-C. (2013). Negative affectivity and workplace deviance: The moderating role of ethical climate. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *24*(15), 2894–2910.

Christian, M., & Ellis, A. (2011). Examining the effects of sleep deprivation on workplace deviance: A self-regulatory perspective. *Academy of Management Journal*, *54*(5), 913–934.

Duffy, M., Ganster, D., & Pagon, M. (2002). Social undermining in the workplace. *Academy of Management Journal*, *45*(2), 331–351.

Durrat, M., Amyx, D., & Bennett, R. (2010). An investigation into the effects of work–family conflict and job satisfaction on salesperson deviance. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, *30*(3), 239–251.

Greenberg, J., & Baron, R. A. (2007). *Behavior in organizations* (9th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Litzky, B., Eddleston, K., & Kidder, D. (2006). The good, the bad, and the misguided: How managers inadvertently encourage deviant behaviors. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, *20*(1), 91–103.

Liu, N.-T., & Ding, C. G. (2012). General ethical judgments, perceived organizational support, interactional justice and workplace deviance. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *23*(13), 2712–2735.

Marcus, B., & Schuler, H. (2004). Antecedents of counterproductive behavior at work: A general perspective. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *89*(4), 647–660.

Marcus, B., Taylor, O., Hastings, S., Sturm, A., & Weigelt, S. (2016). The structure of counterproductive work behavior: A review, a structural meta-analysis and a primary study. *Journal of Management*, *42*(1), 203–233.

Nasir, M., & Bashir, A. (2012). Examining workplace deviance in public sector organizations of Pakistan. *International Journal of Social Economics*, *39*(4), 240–253.

Oh, I.-S., Lee, K., Ashton, M., & de Vries, R. (2011). Are dishonest extraverts more harmful than dishonest introverts? The interaction effects of honesty-humility and extraversion in predicting workplace deviance. *Applied Psychology*, *60*(3), 496–516.

Palo, S., & Chawla, A. (2015). Incidences of workplace deviance behavior among nurses. *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, *51*, 150–161.

Robbins, D. L., & Galperin, B. L. (2010). Constructive deviance: Striving toward organizational change in healthcare. *Journal of Management and Marketing Research*, *5*, 1–11.

Robinson, S. L., & Bennett, R. J. (2004). A typology of deviant workplace behaviors: A multidimensional scaling study. *Academy of Management Journal*, *38*, 555–572.

Sady, K., Spitzmuller, C., & Witt, L. A. (2008). Good employee, bad business: An interactionist approach to workplace deviance. *Academy of Management Proceedings*. Available from http://proceedings.aom.org/content/2008/1/1.98.full.pdf+html

Sims, R. (2002). *Managing organizational behavior*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Spector, P., Fox, S., & Domagalski, T. (2006). Emotions, violence and counterproductive work behavior. In E. K. Kelloway, J. Barling & J. Hurrell (Eds.), *Handbook of workplace violence* (chap. 3). New York: SAGE.

Vogelsmeier, A., Halbesleben, J., & Scott-Caweizell, J. (2008). Technology implementation and workarounds in the nursing home. *Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association*, *15*(1), 114–119.

Walsh, G. (2014). Extra- and intra-organizational drivers of workplace deviance. *The Services Industries Journal*, *34*(14), 1134–1153.

Zeffane, R., Ibrahim, M., & Al Mehairi, R. (2008). Exploring the differential impact of job satisfaction on employee attendance and conduct: The case of a utility company in the United Arab Emirates. *Employee Relations*, *30*(3), 237–250.