

Workplace Deviance: A Review of Literature

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ABSTRACT

Employees are considered to be the most valuable asset in the organization. The success or failure of organizations depends on the behaviour of employees at work. Some of these behaviors are constructive and are beneficial to organizations while others are destructive and are detrimental to them. The destructive behaviour is also known as the workplace deviant or employees' deviant behaviour. Employees can engage in various types of deviant behaviour at workplace which may for example include fraud, theft, unauthorized absence from work, gossiping and so on. From the past decades, workplace deviance has become a subject of immense interest between researchers of human resource management and organizational behaviour due to its psychological, sociological and economic implications in the organization. Organizations are losing crown of wealth and reputation as a result of prevalence of deviant behaviour of employees at worksites. Thus, the present review of literature is an attempt to contribute to the growing body of knowledge by highlighting the concept of workplace deviance and its various dimensions. Moreover, it will also highlight the current status of workplace deviance in Indian context. The underlying work may be used to provide an insight and references on some of the conceptual and practical work undertaken in the area of the said construct.

Keywords: *Dimensions, Deviant behaviour, workplace deviance, Voluntary Behaviour, employees' deviance*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, researchers and practitioners across the globe have shown increased research attention in the organizational behavioral literature towards the deviant behaviour of employees at workplace. Work place deviance according to Robinson and Bennet (1995)^[1] is a “voluntary behavior of organizational members that violates rules and norms of the organization and in so doing, threatens the wellbeing of an organization or its members”. It has become a subject of hot topic to scholars due its prevalence and associated costs. Research has estimated that 33% to 75% of employees experience workplace deviance which may for example include theft, fraud, vandalism, sabotage and unauthorized absenteeism (Harper, 1990)^[2]. Similarly, research believes that more than 2 million people were physically attacked at work, about 6 million workers threatened, and nearly 16 million people harassed as reported by North Western National Life Insurance Company (1993). Researchers have revealed that organizations

suffer considerable economic losses due to these deviant behaviors of employees (Muafi, 2011)^[3]. U.S.A reports for example, indicate that about \$50 billion are lost annually due to theft by the employees. The Asian countries also have a high percentage of loss amounting to \$20 billion next to U.S.A and Africa as reported by the Kroll's Global Fraud Survey 2014. Similarly, Murphy (1993)^[4] argued that deviant behavior costs organizations approximately to 200 billion dollars annually. The above statistics indicates that workplace deviance is alarming and has a huge financial impact on the organizations. Moreover, research has also indicated the negative effect of deviant on the members of the organization. As for instance, employees' exposure to other employees' deviance can lead to stress-related problems, low morale, damaged self esteem, increased fear at work, and turnover, reduced productivity and psychological and physical pain (O'Leary-Kelly et al, 1996^[5]; Henle et al,2005)^[6]. From the empirical study done by Rana and Punia (2016)^[7], deviant workplace behaviour is prevalent to a large extent among the employees in the Indian corporate sector. Similarly, Pradhan and Pradhan's (2014)^[8] study highlighted that theft, fraud, information theft, arguing, rude behaviors, sabotage etc. were suspected to be fastest growing within the workplace context of India. Despite the high prevalence and associated costs, literature on workplace deviance is very sparse in our context. Taking cue from the extant literature, the current study is an attempt to provide simplified insights on the concept of workplace deviance and its various dimensions.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To understand the definition and various dimensions of workplace deviance;
- To analyze the status of workplace deviance in Indian organizations;
- Suggestions and conclusions are given at the end

III. METHODOLOGY

The present review of literature examined peer-reviewed journals, working papers and other published resources relevant to workplace deviance. Articles were found through the online journal databases like Emerald, Taylor & Francis, Science Direct and Jstor. As such various keywords like counterproductive behaviors, employees' deviance, workplace deviance and aggressive behaviour were used to extract the information for the given purpose

IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Workplace deviance is a common problem faced by almost all the organizations across the globe. The concept of workplace deviance is not a new topic to discuss in corporate world (Javed et al. 2014)^[9] but factors that cause deviant behaviour are still reporting new dimensions with the passage of time and circumstances (Shakir & Siddique, 2014)^[10]. Work place deviance according to Robinson and Bennet (1995)^[11] is a “voluntary behavior of organizational members that violates rules and norms of the organization and in so doing, threatens the wellbeing of an organization or its members”. There are different types of deviant behaviors that employees commit in a workplace. These behaviors as indicated by Giacalone and Greenberg (1997)^[11] may for example include unauthorized absence of the employees’, theft from the organization, take excessive breaks, spread rumours, show favoritism, come late to work and so on. Organizational behaviour researchers believe that a behaviour that deviates from organizational and group norms could have the potential to bring harmful implications to both the individuals and organizations. Researchers attach different labels to workplace deviance such as “organizational vice” and moral weakness (Javed et al, 2016)^[12], counterproductive behaviour (Mangione and Quinn, 1975)^[13], Aggressive Behavior (Anderson & Pearson, 1999)^[14], organizational misbehavior (Vardi & Wiener, 1996)^[15] and antisocial behavior (Giacalone & Greenberg, 1997)^[11]. Various researchers define workplace behaviors differently. Moberg (1997)^[16] explained organizational vice as “an act that betrays the trust of either individuals or the organization”. Similarly, Vardi & Wiener (1996)^[15] describes Organizational Misbehavior as “any intentional action by individuals of the organization that violates the norms of the organization and or society”. Giacalone and Greenberg (1997)^[11] describe Antisocial Behaviour,” as any behaviour that brings harmful implications to an organization, its employees, or other stakeholders.” Anderson and Pearson (1999)^[14] explained aggression as deviant behavior with intent to harm. Spector and Fox (1992)^[17] for example argued that CWB ranges from minor to major behavior of employees that harms an organization. Despite the lack of homogeneity however, on the terminologies and definitions presented by them, organizational behavioral researchers believes that they share commonalities like a) voluntary behaviour, b) violating significant organizational norms, c) targeting individuals or organization and d) harming organization, its members or both. Such behaviors can be summed up as either directed towards the organization or towards the individuals. This paper focuses on destructive deviance behaviour (Robinson & Bennett, 1995)^[11], as it is a mixture of these negative behaviors.

V. TYPOLOGY OF DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR:

Robinson and Bennet (1995)^[11] framework of workplace deviance comprises of two main dimensions: the severity of the deviance and whether the deviance can bring harmful implication to individual or the whole organization. They initially made groups of these deviant acts into four different classes such as production deviance, property deviance, political deviance and personal aggression. Subsequently, Bennet and Robinson (2000)^[18] classified these deviant behaviors on the basis of their targets i.e. interpersonal and organizational deviance. The distinction between these two forms of workplace deviance is important because they may differ from each other in terms of their antecedents (Robinson and Bennet 1995)^[11]. Likewise, Stewart et al (2009)^[19] modified his self –reported measure of workplace deviance into non- self

reported measure. Research indicates that assessing deviant behavior of the employees from others (i.e. through co-workers and supervisors) are organized differently in a three factor structure (i.e. Production deviance, property deviance and personal aggression) as only two dimensions were found in self-reported measure by Bennet and Robinson (2000) ^[18]. It was explained by Stewart et al (2009) ^[19] that political deviance may be the most difficult and the raters may not be able to detect it because such behaviors are only veiled attacks that only the target recognizes. However, Robinson and Bennets (1995) ^[1] typology will be discussed below:

Production Deviance: Minor behaviour that has a direct influence on the work being done in the organization and effects on the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization. It may for example include reading a newspaper instead of doing work, excessive chat with the co-workers, come late to work and so on. Researchers have also included cyberloafings as one of the production deviance recently.

Property Deviance: This deviant behaviour is related with the property. It refers to employees' serious behaviour where they can damage or misuse an organization's property. These behaviors may for example include sabotage, theft, falsify accounts etc. Researchers argued that these behaviors can bring costs to the organization which will eventually impact on the productivity as well.

Political Deviance: Behaviors in the political deviance category are relatively less harmful and victims of these behaviors are employees in the organization. Political deviance is a kind of interpersonal behaviour including favoritism towards someone, blaming co-workers, gossiping with co-workers thereby wasting crucial work time and competing non-beneficially with the co-workers.

Personal Aggression: It is a kind of interpersonal behaviour that is more harmful than political deviance. The personal aggression involves acts like sexual harassment, physical and verbal abuse, endangering co-workers or stealing from co-worker at the workplace which is directed towards the employees of the organization.

Organizational researchers have widely used this typology to predict different kinds of deviant behaviors in a workplace.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Deviance is a costly and pervasive workplace behavior that has harmful implications for both the individuals as well as organizations. It is therefore important to continue research efforts that attempt to further our understanding of workplace deviance and may help curb this harmful behavior in its various forms. Given the negative consequences and high prevalence of workplace deviance, we hope this review paper will inspire both the human resource management and organizational behaviour researchers to further investigate this serious workplace phenomenon and will assist and encourage practitioners to develop policies and measures to reduce the occurrence and impact of various dimensions of workplace deviance. Moreover, the literature on workplace deviance is very sparse in India. We hope that this review of workplace deviance literature will encourage researchers and practitioners to do more and more empirical studies so as to gain better insights into this phenomenon especially in Indian context.

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