Stress and Job Satisfaction as Antecedents of Workplace Deviant Behavior

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Abstract: Workplace deviant behavior, under its many labels and conceptualizations has become a major topic of research in the management and industrial organizational psychology literature. This study aims to investigate the relationship between workplace deviant behavior and other work related factors; work-related stress and job satisfaction. Data were collected from 162 subjects who were working as civil servants in Malaysia using a set of questionnaires that measure the variables studied. The results showed that both job stress and job satisfaction predict workplace deviant behaviour. Results also showed a negative relationship between job satisfaction and workplace deviant behavior and a positive relationship between stress and workplace deviant behavior. This study could not find significant relationship between gender and marital status with workplace deviant behavior. Implications for future research are discussed.

Key words: Workplace deviant behavior · Work-related stress · Job satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Billions of dollars were lost each year as a result of workplace deviance. Workplace deviance (WDB) is an important topic for organizational researchers and practitioners because of its increasing occurrence and potential consequences [1]. In recent years, it has also generated high interest among industrial organizational psychologists because of its pervasiveness in organizations. Much of this interest has been stimulated by media attention given to workplace violence. Attempts have been made to estimate the prevalence of workplace deviance; they give some symptoms of how widespread workplace deviance is [2].

Deviant actions occur every day. As mentioned above, it is clear that such kinds of behaviors have negative impacts on organizations, their customers and their employees because of the prevalence and financial costs on the organizations. The prevalence of workplace deviance is therefore costly to both organizations and individuals [3]. When employees engage in workplace deviant behavior, these behaviors can have detrimental effects on the organizations. For instance, organizations lost up to USD200 billion dollars per year from employee theft, USD4.2 billion for violence and USD5.3 billion for employees' recreational web surfing [4].

Employees who are targets of deviance may experience more turnover, damaged self-esteem, increase fear and insecurity at work and psychological and physical pain [5, 6]. The discussions above illustrated that the impact of these behaviors are important and serious and needs to be investigated by organizational researchers [7].

Over the past decade, organizational researchers, particularly industrial and organizational psychologists have paid increasing attention to these behaviors. Greenberg *et al.* [8] investigated employee theft as a major form of organizational misbehavior. They claimed that these phenomenon are certainly universal and thus it is assumed that most members of organizations engage in some form of misbehavior related to their jobs. Organizational misbehavior is defined as an act in the workplace that are done intentionally and constitute a violation of rules pertaining to such behaviors [9]. Workplace deviance also can be described as the deliberate or intentional desire to cause harm to an organization. It can be seen as the voluntary behavior that violates institutionalized norms and in doing so threatens the well-being of the organization.

Workplace deviance can be a response to job stressor and other conditions that induce negative

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emotions [1]. Spector and Fox developed a stressor-emotion model of workplace deviance behavior that suggests deviant behaviors are responses to job stressors at work. Their model was divided into four parts: first, they examined stressful job conditions that induce negative emotions (e.g., anger). Second, they explained that many forms of negative emotions (e.g., anxiety and anger) that are associated with workplace deviant behavior or counterproductive behavior. Third, they stated that one of the important elements in workplace deviance in this model is control. Fourth, they found that personality is an essentially important element in workplace deviant behavior. According to Spector and Fox's model, perceived stressors in workplace can lead to emotional reactions and as a result can induce deviant behaviors in organizations.

Mitchell and Ambrose [10] carried out a research to examine the relationship between abusive supervision and employee workplace deviance using the moderating effects of negative reciprocity beliefs. They hypothesized that negative reciprocity will moderate the relationship between abusive supervision and employee deviance: also abusive supervision will be strongly associated to supervisor-directed deviance when employees believe in negative reciprocity. They found that abusive supervision is positively and significantly related to each type of deviance. Further, negative reciprocity beliefs were significantly and positively related to all types of deviance. They concluded that employees with negative reciprocity beliefs consider revenge an appropriate response to negative treatment.

A study carried out by Chen and Spector [11] included measures of role ambiguity, role conflict, interpersonal conflict and workload along with organizational constraints in relation to work place deviance. They showed a support for the link between stress and deviance. They also examined work stressors, aggression, theft and substance abuse. The result showed all of them were correlated significantly with hostility and all but workload were correlated significantly with aggression and sabotage. Additional research has also supported these findings [12, 13].

A survey on approximately three hundred employees at a variety of organizations in southern and central Florida was carried out to look at the relationship among job stressors, perceived justice, negative emotional reactions to work, counterproductive work behavior, autonomy and affective traits [14]. The survey focused on how often an employee experienced arguments, yelling and rudeness while interacting with co-workers. A significant relationship between job stressors and deviance was found. Job stressors, including perceived injustice was found to be related to both negative emotions and counterproductive work behavior. Furthermore, negative emotion was significantly correlated with all stressors and counterproductive variables. No support was found for the expected moderating role of autonomy in the relationship between stressor and counterproductive work behavior. There was also no significant correlation between interpersonal deviance and procedural justice. Similar findings was also found in another study carried out among nurses [14].

A meta-analysis of 57 empirical studies regarding workplace aggression's antecedents was conducted [15]. Findings of the studies showed certain predictors of deviant behavior in the workplace. Specifically, interpersonal conflict was highlighted as a predictor of deviance. Deviance was found to be a method of coping with workplace stressors. The results of this research indicated that the strongest predictors of deviant behavior in the workplace were interpersonal conflict and situational constraints.

In sum, stress in the workplace has many negative effects on an organization and its members [11]. Stressful situations made employees frustrated, impatient, or irritated. As a consequence, these types of emotions often lead to a variety of deviant behaviors [9].

Workplace deviance is a response to emotional-arousing situation in organizations [1]. As such, it can be said that workplace deviance is an emotional response to job satisfaction in organization. As a result, less satisfied employees may be more motivated to commit acts of deviance than employees who are more satisfied. From a conceptual perspective and based on inductive reasoning, it follows that individuals who are dissatisfied with their jobs are likely to put less effort into their work or to act in destructive ways toward their organization [15]. Similarly, individuals who have a negative appraisal of their work would be more likely to engage in workplace deviant behavior [16, 17].

A meta-analysis has shown the role of job satisfaction on aggression in the workplace [15]. Several probable predictive variables for deviance, including gender, negative affectivity and job satisfaction was examined. The result showed that one of the strongest

predictors of organizational aggression was job satisfaction. A research among salesperson also found that divergence between work and family roles and job satisfaction can lead to violating organization norms that is deviance behavior [18].

Job satisfaction has also been shown to be related to employees' evaluations of their work experiences [19]. The quality of one's work experience takes many factors into consideration and is often measured by job satisfaction scales. It was hypothesized that employees would be more or less engaging in deviant, as a result of employee perceptions of quality of work experience. The research focused on some aspects of the work experience and levels of job satisfaction to determine perceived quality of work experience. The result showed that employees who had lower levels of job satisfaction were more likely to engage in deviant behaviors than those who had higher scores on measures of job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction has also been surveyed in conjunction with specific deviant behaviors. For instance, theft is a form of deviance which has been shown to correlate with job satisfaction. A research that focus on the relationship between employee deviance and theft in organization was conducted [19]. The result of the research supported this idea that dissatisfied employees are more likely to steal from their organizations. Furthermore, another research on job satisfaction, climate perceptions and the occurrence of theft among supermarket employee was also conducted [20]. An examination on the relationship between these variable found that less satisfied employees reported significantly more acts of deviance than their more satisfied employees.

With regards to demographics factors with workplace deviance behavior, findings have been inconsistent. Some findings found differences in workplace deviance behavior between employees with different demographic background, whereas some studies could not find any difference. One study indicated that gender were strong predictors of interpersonal aggression [15]. Gender and age were found to be related to workplace deviant behavior while tenure was not. A meta analysis done to review antecedent of deviant behavior in organization found that age, sex and marital status were all valid predictors of different deviant behavior with age as the most powerful predictor of deviant behavior [22].

Thus the current study intends to investigate the relationship between workplace deviant behavior and

work related stress and job satisfaction. The study would also investigate the difference in work deviant behavior among subjects of different gender. Three hypotheses were developed:

- There is a negative significant relationship between job satisfaction and workplace deviance behavior.
- There is a positive significant relationship between job- related stress and workplace deviance behavior.
- There is a significant difference in workplace deviance behavior between gender.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design: This study used a non-experimental quantitative research design. A set of questionnaire was used at a single point of time. The study was designed to examine the relationship between job stress, job satisfaction as independent variables with workplace deviant behaviour as dependent variable. This exploratory study was used to determine and describe the degree of relationship between dependent and independent variables in descriptive and quantitative terms.

Participants and Procedures: This study was conducted in a government (public) organization in Malaysia. The participants in this study were 162 civil servants who were selected randomly from an organization. A random sampling method was used to get the participants. The participants consisted of 73 males and 89 females ranging in age from 18 to 65. Of the 162 participants, 50.6% (N=82) were single and 49.4% (80) were married. In terms of organizational tenure, most participants, 83.3% (N=135) reported their organizational tenure was less than 10 years, 9.9 % (N=16) reported their organizational tenure between 11 -20 years and 4.3 % (N=7) reported their organizational tenure more than 20 years.

Instruments: A set of questionnaires that consists of four sections was used to measure the studied variables.

Measurement for Workplace Deviant Behavior: Employee workplace deviant behavior was measured using workplace deviance scale. [23]. This 19-items questionnaires with a 7-point Likert-type response scale was used to measure the extent to which participants have

engaged in workplace deviance during the past year. Item responses ranged from 1 = never, 2 = once a year, 3 = twice a year, 4 = several times a year, 5 = monthly, 6 = weekly, 7 = daily. Examples of the workplace deviance items included: "Played a mean trick on someone at work", "Made fun of someone at work", "Cursed at someone at work". Cronbach's Alpha for the 19 workplace deviance items was α = .921.

Job Satisfaction Measurement: In this study, job satisfaction was assessed using Brayfield and Rothe's measure of Job Satisfaction [24]. This 19-items 7-point Likert-type response scale was used to measure participants' satisfaction with their job. Item responses measured the degree to which an individual agreed or disagreed with each statement. Responses ranged from 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree. Examples of questionnaire items included: "My job is like a hobby to me", "I feel fairly satisfied with my present job", "I definitely dislike my work". The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for this scale was a strong α = .819.

Work-Related Stress Measurement: This construct was measured using a modified form of the Stress in General Scale [25]. This 15- items scale consisted of two distinct subscales; one which measured stress related to time pressure (SIG-I, α = .87) and the other which measured stress related to threat (SIG-II, α = .86). This scale consisted of stress-related words and participants responded to each item by rating whether or not they experienced these stress-related feelings at work. Item responses included: 0 = no, undecided (?) = 1, 2 = yes. Example items included: "Demanding", "Hassled", "Irritating". Cronbach's Alpha for the 15 job-related stress items was α= .678.

Demographic Questions: Two demographic items were included in the survey. Items assessed participants' gender and marital status.

Statistical Analysis: The data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The data file was uploaded into SPSS 16 and the variables

were categorized as nominal, ordinal or scale as appropriate. In addition, the variables were labeled appropriately to make the SPSS output easier to interpret. Reliability coefficients were computed for all variables. This study utilized such technique as descriptive statistics, Cronbach's Alpha, Frequency test, Pearson's Correlational analysis and independent sample t-test to investigate the relationships between the independent and dependent variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Descriptive statistics for workplace deviance behavior, work related stress and job satisfaction in the research can be seen in Table 1.

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive significant relationship between work related stress and workplace deviance behavior.

This hypothesis was tested using Pearson correlation coefficient. Results from the analysis (Table 2) showed that there is a positive significant relationship between work related stress and workplace deviance behavior (r= .325, p< 0.05). This means that the higher the work related stress reported by the subjects, the higher the tendency for them to be involved in workplace deviance behavior. Thus hypothesis 1 was supported.

As was known, work related stress can have many negative effects on an organization and its employees. Stressful situations and experience in workplace can greatly influence employee behavior because it can cause the employee to become frustrated, impatient and irritated. This type of emotions very often can lead to a variety of deviant behaviors. Workplace deviance can also be seen as a response to job stressor and other conditions that induce negative emotions [1]. It was suggested that deviant behaviors are responses to job stressors at work. Thus it was possible as shown in the study that work related stress had positive and significant relationship with WDB.

The findings is consistent with research done by other researchers whereby they found that deviant behavior was associated with job stressors such as role ambiguity, role conflict, interpersonal conflict and work

Table1: Mean and standard deviation scores for WDB, work related stress and job satisfaction

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min. Score	Max. Score
Workplace deviant behavior	162	38.34	18.01	19.00	95.00
Work related stress	162	31.69	4.25	21.00	45.00
Job satisfaction	162	59.84	6.33	35.00	73.00

Table 2: Correlation for relationship between WDB, work related stress and job satisfaction

Variables	r
Work related stress	.325*
Job satisfaction	-.342*

* $p < 0.05$

Table 3: t- test to look at the difference in workplace deviant among subjects of different gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	df	t
Male	73	2.03	0.98	160	0.18
Female	89	2.01	0.93		

load. Their findings also showed support for the link between stress and other deviant behavior such as aggression, theft and hostility.

Hypothesis 2: There is a negative significant relationship between job satisfaction and workplace deviance behavior.

Results in Table 2 showed that there is a negative significant relationship between job satisfaction and WDB (r= -.342, p<0.05). This finding showed that employees who experienced high level of job satisfaction will report low level of workplace deviant behavior compared to those employees who experienced low job satisfaction will report high workplace deviance behavior. This finding is consistent with past researches. Researchers have shown that dissatisfaction can also contribute to workplace deviance and can also results in a higher incidence of minor offenses. The deviant behavior showed by the employee could be interpersonal deviance such as gossiping and blaming coworkers which is though minor is unhealthy. Other minor offences that can occur are employee silence and cyber loafing.

Employees who are less satisfied with their jobs may become less productive because their needs was not met. Thus as a result of frustration towards the organization there will be a tendency for the employees to behave defiantly. Following this, it is likely for the employees who are dissatisfied with their jobs to put less effort into their work or to act in a destructive way towards their organization such as production deviance whereby the employee showed behavior that violates formally organizational norms in terms of the quantity and quality of the work accomplished.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant difference in workplace deviance behavior between gender.

Results from t- test (Table 3) showed that there is no significant difference in work place deviant behavior between male and female worker (t= .177, p > 0.05).

From Table 3 it can be seen that there is no difference in the means between the two groups which means that for both male and female subjects the occurrence of deviant behavior among them are the same. This findings does not support previous findings [15, 21], whereby in their findings they found that gender can predict and is related to work place deviance.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion consistent with previous studies, this study found that job stress and job satisfaction yielded significant relationship with workplace deviant. However the direction of the relationship were different whereby for job stress the higher the job stress the higher the workplace deviant, while for job satisfaction the more satisfied the subjects, the lesser the workplace deviant. As for differences in workplace deviant behavior between genders, the study did not find any significant difference.

For future research on workplace deviant behavior, a large number of respondents should be used. Like any other organizational behaviors, workplace deviant behavior is best seen when performed collectively which will contribute highly to the validity of the data. In addition, more research is needed to examine the moderating effect of personality traits on relation between stress and job satisfaction with workplace deviance behavior.

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