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Research paper

Workplace Deviant Behavior among Malaysia hotel Employees. Does organizational Factors Matter?

Mazni Alias[1], Chew Kok Wai[2], Zauwiyah Ahmad[3], Abdul Mutalib Azim[4]

[1,2]Faculty of Management, Multimedia University, Persiaran Multimedia, 63100, Cyberjaya, Selangor
3Faculty of Business, Multimedia University, Jalan Ayer Keroh Lama, 75450, Melaka
[4]Kolej Universiti Islam Melaka, Kampus Utama, Batu 28, Kuala Sungai Baru, Melaka

Abstract

This study aims to develop a theoretical model of the determinants of workplace deviant behaviour among Malaysia hotel employees. From our extensive reviews, we found that organisational-related factors are potential in predicting hotel employee's deviant behaviour. We established that organisational justice, trust in management, work autonomy, organisational constraint and organisational ethical climate as the organisational-related factors potential to influence deviant behaviour. Practical involvements of HR professionals were recommended to support organisation in eradicating deviant behaviour at workplace.

Keywords: *Workplace Deviant Behavior, Organisational Justice, Trust in Management, Work Autonomy, Organisational Constraint, Organisational Ethical Climate*

1. Introduction

In Malaysia, integrity has been the main component in the Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016–2020). The plan indicates the anchoring growth on people which are improving the wellbeing of people and accelerating human capital development. Malaysia is known for its strong global tourism position. It has been stipulated in the Tourism National Key Economic Areas (NKEA) that tourism industry will be expected to grow as three times and contribute RM3 billion receipts per week to the country in year 2020. However, the cases of deviant act by hotel employees has become a significant issue which will implicate in the achievement of NKEA's goals for tourism industry, as well as strategic reform initiative (SRI) and New Economic Model.

It is revealed that various deviant behavior exists among hotel employees in Malaysia (1). However, little research effort has been made by researchers to examine this issue (2) and in the Asian context (3). Furthermore, not many studies have involved organisational factors with deviant behavior specifically in the hotel industry context. Due to the massive consequences of resources and productivity due to this negative behaviour, it is highly important to look into this issue which also has been identify as a significant negative effect to human resource development (3). Hence, demand serious attention from researchers to examine workplace deviant behaviour specifically in the hotel industry context in Malaysia.

Workplace deviant behaviour has been identified as an emerging or existing phenomenon which has permeated in today's workplace. Such behaviour implicates an employees' work effort and performance of organisation (4). It remnants the relationship and also aggravating revengeful feelings among members in the organisation (4). Other implications include infers possible negative relationships not only between co-workers but also among employer and employee relationships (5). This leads to the generation of toxic culture in organisation and vanguards the apocalyptic wellbeing of the organisation. Such behavior implicates the employee's quality service commitment to customers that may affect the tourism and hospitality industry. With such firm belief, it is essential for human resource development professionals to identify the factors that contributes.

Various studies have concluded that organisational-related factors contributed to the exhibiting of deviant behaviour among employees (2; 3). For this study, we have included certain organisational-related factors which have been identified to influence the inculcation of negative behaviour among employees. We have identified that organisational justice, trust in management, work autonomy, organisational constraint and organisational ethical climate are prominent in predicting workplace deviant behaviour among employees. The selection of these variables reflected the boundaries that this study places in limiting the scope. The constructs and the variables used in this study were deduced from theoretical and empirical evidences. In this study, we employed Social Exchange Theory to support our framework which has its roots in psychology and also in sociology.

This paper is organised as follows: First we look into the construct and implications of workplace deviant behavior. Secondly, we describe Social Exchange Theory as the theoretical foundations from which we derived the factors that we studied. Thirdly, we clarify the relations between the organizational-related factors and workplace deviant behavior. Finally, we conclude this paper by formulating a theoretical framework of workplace deviant behaviour.

1.1. Objective of the Study

The purpose of this study is to develop a theoretical model that we believe to attribute to workplace deviant behavior among hotel employees in Malaysia. Significant contribution of this study can be viewed in terms of its contributions to both theory and practices. We employed a classical theory; Social Exchange Theory to be

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our underlying theory to support the research framework. In terms of practice, the result of this study is expected to add to the body of knowledge on workplace deviant behavior involving employees' in the Malaysia hotel context.

1.2. Research Methodology

The primary method that we used basically looking into the review related to workplace deviant behaviour which covers through various search in the field of psychology and organisational psychology. This include multidisciplinary search of literature published in Malaysia and all over the world. The following key words were used such as "workplace deviant behavior", "organisational justice", "trust in management", "work autonomy", "organisational constraint" and "organisational ethical climate", "hotel employees" and "Social Exchange Theory". The databases that were involved in the university's library are Proquest, Psychinfo, Jstor, Eric, Blackwell Synergy and Ebsco. The search generated more than seventy publications which mostly are peer-reviewed journals. We found that the majority of the studies came from the United Kingdom and European countries. Finally, forty-four publications were used as relevant to fulfil the objective of this study.

1.3. Workplace Deviant Behavior

Deviance traditionally refers to intentional behaviors that depart from organizational norms and threaten the wellbeing of individuals and members in the organization (6). In the organizational behavior literature, two streams of deviance research exist, but these streams are not integrated. One stream is looking at the negative or destructive deviance while the other is looking at positive or constructive deviance. These two streams of deviance contribute to desirable (positive deviance) and undesirable behavior (negative or destructive deviance).

The positive deviant workplace behavior can be classified as prosocial type of behavior such as organizational citizenship behaviors, whistle blowing, corporate social responsibility and innovation. These constructive behaviors are more focus on actions which have honourable intentions, irrespective of the outcomes. Further examples of constructive deviance are innovation, criticizing incompetent managers, and non-compliance with dysfunctional directives, a manager violate company procedures in order to solve a customer's problem and criticizing incompetent superiors. Appelbaum et al. (7) suggest that these behaviors assist towards organization's competitive advantage and societal wellbeing. On the other hand, destructive deviant behavior involves sexual harassment, vandalism, rumour spreading or otherwise, it has negative consequences for the entity and its affiliates. Due to its pervasive impact on the individual and organizations, this paper will focus on this destructive deviant behavior. Workplace deviance has two categories. Bennett and Robinson (6) highlighted that workplace deviance can be directed towards the organization or individuals. The first type is interpersonal deviance which could harm individuals while the second type is organizational deviance that is directed to the organization itself. The following section elaborated further discussion on the negative deviant behaviors associated with the organisational-related factors.

1.4. Workplace Deviance Theories

Social Exchange theory have been employed by researchers in explaining workplace deviance. This theory describes the reciprocity that occurs between the organizational context and the individual (8). From a social exchange perspective, an unfavourable or unsupportive work environment harmony be reciprocated with deviant behavior (9). Social Exchange Theory predicted that individuals who perceived that they were receiving unfavourable treatment from their organizations were more likely to feel angry, vengeful, and dissatisfied (10). Previous researchers (e.g., 11; 12) have also adopted this theory to explain organizational-related factors such as perceived organizational support, organizational justice, and trust in organization and organizational ethical climate in predicting workplace deviance. Jacobson (8) further highlighted that by utilizing the Social Exchange Theory in explaining deviant behavior lead to a more parsimonious theory.

Many studies used social exchange theory to describe the development of workplace deviant behavior (e.g., 3; 12). This theory suggested that, the individuals who receive benefits from others will feel obligated to reciprocate the benefits (e.g. 13). In the context of this study, the exchange relationship happened when organization provides support to their employees, and as an exchange, employees reflect that support with necessary behavior. Based on this theory, organizational justice, and trust in management, work autonomy, organizational constraint and organizational ethical climate seen as organizational support that may reflect employees' behavior.

1.5. Organizational Justice and Workplace deviant behavior

In general, there are three dimensions of organizational justice, namely: distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice (14). Research constantly shows that individual behavior in the workplace is affected by perception of organizational justice (14). That is, if employees perceive the outcomes of their evaluations to be unfair or perceive the process by which outcome allocation decisions are made to be unfair, they will be likely to shape negative behaviors (15). Meanwhile, Demir (16) indicated that the likelihood of workplace deviance behaviors increased when employee's perceived injustice in the workplace. Previous studies found that all three dimensions of organizational justice have a significant effect to workplace deviance behavior. Empirical research supports the relationship between organizational justice and workplace deviance behavior (17).

Hypothesis 1: There is a negative relationship between organisational justice and workplace deviant behavior

1.6. Trust in Management and Workplace deviant behavior

Trust is defined by Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (18) as 'the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party'. Organizational trust is defined as an employee's attitudes and expectations about the probability that the employing organization's future actions will be favorable and advantageous, or at least not detrimental to employees' interests (19).

The trust dynamic builds on an integrated social attachment-exchange perspective in that a worker's trust level is based on previous interactions with his/her employer and the belief that future interactions will be similar to those in the past. If the worker experiences negative interactions with his/her organization then adverse future relations will be expected, leading to low levels of organizational trust. The workers' lack of organizational trust influences their engagement in deviant behaviors (20). Organizational trust was found to be negatively correlated with workplace deviance (21).

Hence, the following proposition is suggested:

Hypothesis 2: There is a negative relationship between trust in management and workplace deviant behavior

1.7. Work autonomy and Workplace deviant behavior

Work autonomy is the degree of independence and discretion given to the employee in performing tasks (22). This means, work

autonomy to reduce supervisory or other controls that serve as a hedge against the negative behavior. Vardi and Weitz (23) states that "extensive work autonomy leaves room for action and performance that actually creates opportunities for deviance." Research has consistently found that the deviant behavior, such as fraud and theft, is positively related to opportunities or autonomy granted to employees (for example, 24; 25). In addition, the study found that most of the organization's fraud and theft occur at the highest levels of the company. This may be partly due to the opportunities and high work autonomy.

Work autonomy refers to the freedom employees are allowed when doing their tasks and include the amount of choice they have on the methods or procedures they use, the schedule to which they follow, and the criteria used for their assessment (26). Hence, autonomy provides the employees with the freedom to make decisions and the discretion to act in the manner they best see fit (25).

Hence, the following proposition is suggested:

Hypothesis 3: There is a negative relationship between work autonomy and workplace deviant behavior

1.8. Organizational Constraint and workplace deviant behavior

Situational constraints represent conditions within organisations that limit employees in performing the tasks assigned to them such as lack of materials and equipment, interruptions from work colleagues, insufficient information, and shortage of funding (27; 28). These limitations make it difficult for employees to carry out their job according to organisational expectation. Thus, situational constraints limit employees' work performance (28; 29) while increasing dissatisfaction, frustration and turnover (27).

Within the hotel industry, situational constraint has been proven to exist such as inadequate training, excessive workloads and unsocial work hours (30) and role overload (31). Kao et al. (32) maintained that hotel employees were faced with constraints from unsupportive superiors, colleagues and customers. Based on the study's findings, it could be deduced that workplace deviance could be linked to constraints created by colleagues and customers.

We expected that employees who experience situational constraints would be more predisposed to commit workplace deviance in order to cope with the dissatisfaction and frustration. According to Shoss et al. (33), employees engaged with workplace deviance in order to cope with the stress that stems from situational constraints. Therefore, frustration that resulted from situational constraints would be more apparent, and higher likely to results in workplace deviance due to the uncontrollable nature of the situation.
H4: There is a negative relationship between situational constraint and workplace deviance.

1.9. Organizational Ethical Climate and Workplace deviant behavior

Based on Victor dan Cullen (34), the organization ethical climate means the shared perceptions of what's ethically correct behavior and the way ethical issues needs to be handled within the organization. Numerous studies have revealed that the ethical climate associated with an organization significantly influences the deviant behavior (35; 36). Many scholars have suggested that this ethical climate associated with an organization may be linked not just to the moral behavior of employees, but additionally to a variety of an array of behaviors including counterproductive behaviors for example absenteeism, tardiness and lax performance (37). Thus, the ethical climate associated with an organization could be predictive of both ethical behavior and also the form of deviant workplace behaviors.

Robinson and Bennett (38) outlined that some deviant behaviors are also unethical in nature. Behaviors that violate significant organisational norms are considered as deviant while the same behavior could also be considered as unethical when judged in terms of justice and moral guidelines. Studies have shown that employees' ethical behavior is significantly influenced by the organisational ethical climate (39; 40). Defined as the shared perceptions of what is ethically correct and how ethical issues are to be handled in organisations (34), Wimbush and Shepard (41) suggested that organisational ethical climate may be linked to a range of counterproductive behaviors such as absenteeism and tardiness.

We thus posited that organisational ethical climate also has considerable influence on employees' deviant behavior. Hence, the following hypotheses were constructed.

H5: There is a negative relationship between organisational ethical climate and workplace deviance.
In summary, this section identified the key organisational-related determinants to workplace deviant. The above discussion leads to the derivation of the theoretical framework for measuring workplace deviant behavior among Malaysia hotel employees in the Malaysia context public service organisations. (Refer to Figure 1).

1.10. Theoretical Framework

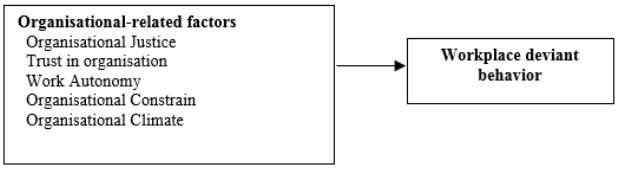


Figure 1: Research framework for measuring workplace deviant behavior among Malaysia hotel employees.

1.11. Managing workplace deviant behavior in the hotel industry

To manage workplace deviant behavior of hotel employee, the organization should be fair in decision-making. Therefore, hotel managers can reduce deviant behavior among their employees by paying attention in providing fair supervision, treating employees with respect and dignity, making employment decisions in a way that is not biased, collecting accurate and complete information before taking any decision, and show sensitivity to employees' personal needs. Provide fair working climate will encourage workers to reciprocate by showing positive behaviors.

More pragmatically, an approach that HRD professionals could take in tackling workplace deviance is by allowing employees to search on topics involving specific behaviors which relates to ethics at work. Discussion on this particular topic will enlighten employees on the pros and cons of engaging in that behavior, which may consequently hinder employees from doing it. The organizations should implement regulations and policies that are made known to all employees. For example, in 2003, the US office of government ethics and the US department of defence had employed online interactive trainings on workplace ethics and regulations to their employees. Similarly, Telecom Malaysia, a telecommunication organisation in Malaysia, has also facilitate an e-learning and training programme to their employees to inculcate ethics at work. The ethics training covers variety of subjects, which include gift giving between government employees, acceptance of gifts from external sources and misuse their positions. Such ethical type of training programme is beneficial to employ-

ees to enhance their knowledge specifically in complying with the organizational norms and rules.

Subsequently, in managing deviance, Jacobson (42) suggested that human resource professionals could play a role in creating a civil workplace which include re-educating employees using planned courses, videos, role playing and online training. Of many efforts, it is claimed that training is the best method for workplace deviance prevention programs. The training should point out the negative implication of destructive behavior to individual, organization, and others. Bartlett and Bartlett (43) highlighted that human resource development professionals should play an important role in creating a workplace policy to support a respectful and civil working environment. They also advocated that human resource development professionals should give the attention and initiative to provide initial assessment of a benchmark for a safe working environment. Such initiative may include doing anonymous employees survey which focuses on various negative behaviour at workplace.

Jacobson (42) postulated that organizations should established employee handbooks to new employees on zero intolerance of destructive behavior during orientation program. He also suggested that topics on negative behaviors could be incorporated into existing HRD courses so that students or future employees are more aware of certain issues and take a leadership role in addressing this problem once they enter the workplace.

2. Conclusion

We began by reviewing the relevant reviews pertaining workplace deviant behavior and then its predictors. This study also expanded our knowledge base with empirical evidence pertaining to the organisational-related factors that influence workplace deviant behavior (2; 44). We identified the constructs that predicted hotel employee's inclination towards deviant behavior as illustrated in Figure 1. A series of hypotheses to test the relationships were developed. Hence, this study provides a predictive framework and hypotheses which could be tested to further explain hotel employees 'engagement to deviant behavior. We can say that deviant workplace behavior cannot be fully eradicated but at the same time can be controlled with suitable measures being taken.

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