Relationships between Dispositional Factors and Workplace Deviant Behavior: The Moderating Role of Religiosity

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ABSTRACT

With the increase of workplace deviant behavior in the organization and the lack of attention and solutions to overcome it, the organization may experience several negative impacts that can jeopardize their company's reputation and financial well-being of the organization. Workplace deviant behavior is refer as any intentional behavior exhibited by a member of the organization that is contradictory to the member's legitimate interest as viewed by the organization. Recent research has highlighted the importance of understanding workplace deviant behavior. Past researchers have found that among the antecedents of workplace deviant behavior are gender and emotional stability. However, very limited studies have examined the role of religiosity as a moderator in the relationships between antecedents and workplace deviant behavior. The role of religiosity is very important as it helps people to shape their behavior through how they think and affect on how they act. Literature has suggested that individuals with high religiosity are more emotionally stable and less deviant at the workplace while males engage in deviant behavior more than females. Despite the existence of earlier studies on religiosity, there is still lack of studies on religiosity that specifically addresses workplace deviant behavior issues. There is also a critical gap in the research on workplace deviant behavior models that had examined religiosity as a moderator. This paper presents a model on the moderating role of religiosity in the relationship between gender and emotional stability, and workplace deviant behavior. The model is developed based on social control theory as well as previous research findings. This model could contribute towards a better understanding of workplace deviant behavior by expanding the previous model with the inclusion of religiosity as the moderating role. Also, the employer should give more attention to the negative effects of workplace deviant behavior and the importance of religiosity as religiosity can moderate the factors affecting workplace deviant behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Workplace deviant behavior refers to behavior that violates organizational norms in a continuum of severities, ranging from minor transgressions such as leaving the office early, intentionally working slow, showing favoritism, and accusing co-workers of serious transgressions such as accepting kickbacks, stealing from the company, verbal abuse, and endangering co-workers (Robinson & Bennett, 2000). Workplace deviant behavior also includes theft, abuse of privileges (Greenberg, 1993), and absenteeism (Kidwell & Bennett, 1993). Workplace deviant behavior has also been labeled as antisocial behavior (Hogan & Hogan, 1989), dysfunctional behavior (Griffin, O'Leary-Kelly, & Collins, 1998), maladaptive behavior (Perlow & Latham, 1993) and counterproductive behavior (Storms & Spector, 1987). Workplace deviant behavior is of growing concern since such behavior can be detrimental to the financial well-being of organizations (Appelbaum, Iaconi, & Matousek, 2007). Past researchers have reported the negative outcomes associated with workplace deviant behavior (Hoel & Salin, 2003). As for the effects on the organization, workplace deviant behavior is shown to be associated with high turnover rate, intention to leave the organization, decreased commitment and productivity, and higher absenteeism (Hoel & Salin, 2003; Keashly & Jagatic, 2003). The results of workplace deviant behavior among victims include lower levels of psychosomatic symptoms and physical illness, job satisfaction, and possible expulsion from the labor market (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Vartia, 2001). Thus, workplace deviant behavior is very costly for the organization, employees and society.

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Workplace deviant behaviors are grouped into two categories, namely, production and property deviance. Production deviance violates organizational norms regarding quality and quantity of work performance (for example, tardiness and work delays) and property deviance includes acquiring or damaging property belonging to the employer (for example, theft). Based on recent research by Nair and Bhatnagar (2011), workplace deviant behavior does not only exist in profit-based organizations, but also in non-profit organizations. In order to reduce the phenomenon of workplace deviant behavior, it is important to identify a factor that could possibly interact with the antecedents of workplace deviant behavior and hence, reduce the effects of the antecedents of workplace deviant behavior. Theoretically, social control theory by Hirschi (1969) proposed that religiosity, will lower the effects of workplace deviant behavior by interacting with the antecedents (gender and emotional stability) of workplace deviant behavior. Thus, this paper focuses on the two antecedents of workplace deviant behavior, namely gender and emotional stability, and the moderating roles of religiosity. The significance of this paper is to provide an understanding of the role of religiosity in reducing deviant behavior as it becomes crucial to increase productivity whether in the private or government sector. Based on our review, we will present a model in which religiosity acts as a moderator of the relationships between gender and emotional stability, and workplace deviant behavior (Figure 1).
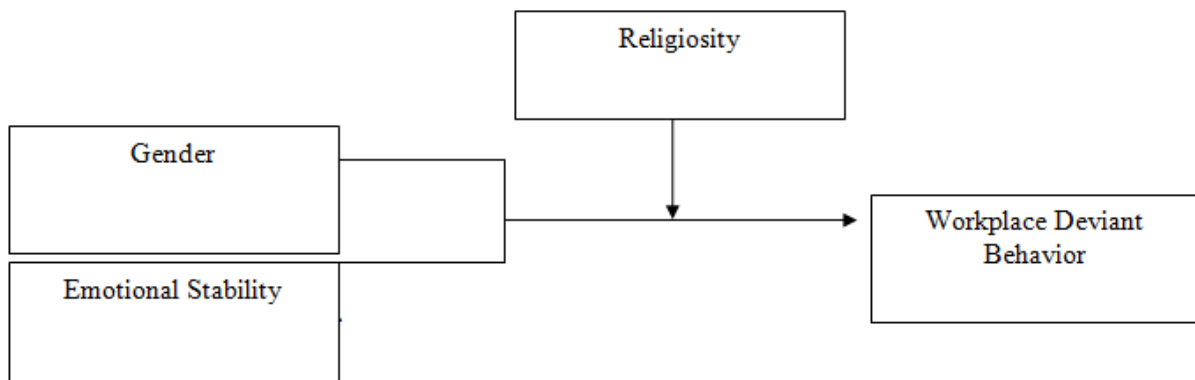

Fig. 1: Moderating Role of Religiosity on the Relationships between Gender and Emotional Stability, and Workplace Deviant Behavior

Literature Review
Workplace Deviant Behavior:

Robinson and Bennett (1995) extended the typology of workplace deviant behavior that includes the target of deviant behavior as either the individual or the organization. In this typology, workplace deviant behavior can be viewed along two dimensions: interpersonal versus organizational and minor versus serious. On the basis of these dimensions, the behavior can be grouped under four categories: personal aggression, political deviance, property deviance, and production deviance. Despite focusing on the negative aspects of workplace deviant behavior, Warren (2003) offers a different typology that considers positive aspects of workplace deviant behavior. Warren (2003) defines workplace deviant behavior as behavioral departure from a reference group's norms and uses hyper norms (global standards) for judging deviance. There are four categories that have been classified by Warren (2003): constructive deviance, destructive deviance, constructive conformity, and destructive conformity. The four categories of the typology emerge by evaluating behavior with respect to reference group norms and hyper norms. Constructive conformity is where reference group norms are in agreement with hyper norms. Destructive conformity is the case of agreement with reference group norms but disagreement with hyper norms. While, constructive deviance is a behavior that may go against organizational norms but are accepted by hyper norms. Destructive deviance occurs when there is disagreement with both, reference group norms and hyper norms.

Past literature has shown that workplace deviant behavior results in a negative effect especially to the organization. Consequently, Litzky, Eddleston, and Kidder (2006) found that workplace deviant behavior incurs huge monetary costs for business and indirectly will damage the organization's reputation. The performance and productivity of the organization also will decrease (Dunlop & Lee, 2004). Apart from that, workplace deviant behavior also gives a negative effect to the individual in the workplace. The victims may suffer from stress and produce a hostile environment (Henle, Giacalone, & Jurkiewicz, 2005). However, some scholars believe that there are several positive outcomes, such as, it serves as a warning signal to the organization, provides a safety value (Bies & Tripp, 1998) and helps to uncover wrongdoings and challenge assumptions like whistle-blowing (Warren, 2003).

Social Control Theory:

Social control theory (Hirschi, 1969) proposes that in order to reduce the tendency of being deviant, a strong bond to family and society is needed. Hence, a strong bond to conventional institutions will deter deviant behavior. In this regard, religiosity plays an important role and is considered as a bonding mechanism for the deterrence of deviance. Baier and Wright (2001) stated that, "Although religion as such was not discussed in the original model, social control theory would hold that by strengthening an individual's bond to society, religious institutions should deter criminal behavior" (p.4). Therefore, religiosity is considered a conventional structure. In other words, it helps in the effort to deter deviance. Religiosity is conceptualized as a social control mechanism or agent with the same function of a family or the school that has been hypothesized by Hirschi (1969).

The basic concept of social control theory is that "delinquent acts result when an individual's bond to society is weak or broken" (Hirschi, 1969, p.16). There are four specific elements of social control theory: 1) attachment to conventional people, 2) commitment to conventional action, 3) involvement in conventional activities, and 4) belief in conventional values. According to this theory, deviant behavior can be prevented when individuals conform to societal norms. When individuals are attached to places of worship and associate with people who are also attached to these places of worship, they are less likely to act deviant as compared to those who are not attached to places of worship (Pickering, 2005). Therefore, a lot of time will be spent for beneficial or religious activities and these individuals will not have much time to think or commit deviant behavior. The individuals will also get a network of support from the involvement in religious activities. The support from the society helps a person to increase his emotional stability as this support gives him a feeling of security and love. Apart from that, the commitment towards religious association may also strengthen their purpose for living. Lastly, the belief system teaches their believers to act against deviant behavior because all religions teach their believers to love and care for others and avoid crime (Bahr, Hawks, & Wang, 1993). Every religion teaches their believers to believe in the hereafter and divine punishment. Hence, it will indirectly reduce risk behavior, especially in men. Hence, religiosity plays a role in controlling deviance.

Emotional Stability and Workplace Deviant Behavior:

Emotional stability refers to the tendency to avoid fluctuations in emotions and negative emotional experiences (Cote & Miners, 2006). It includes the ability to handle or overcome emotionally upsetting experiences and not easily become depressed, feel hopeless or hostile (Gutierrez, Osman, Kopper, & Barrios, 2000). The basic forms of emotional instability are having negative emotions such as guilt, sadness, fear, arousal, and anger. Apart from that, emotional stability is one of the Big Five personalities and it is related to workplace deviant behavior. Lee et al. (2005) found that there is a significant relationship between emotional stability and workplace deviant behavior such as rule breaking, substance use, theft, disciplinary problems, property damage, and other irresponsible behaviors (Salgado, 2002). Berry et al. (2007) indicated that there is a negative relationship between emotional stability and workplace deviant behavior. Nair and Bhatnagar (2011) supported this finding.

Gender and Workplace Deviant Behavior:

Men are more likely to engage in deviant behavior than women due to its risk-taking behavior (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Males are related to deviant behavior because males are much more likely to express overt aggression than females (Eagly & Steffan, 1986) and males demonstrate hostile attribution more often than females (Douglas & Martinko, 2001). It is well documented that males manifest higher levels of self-serving biases than females (Dobbins, Pence, Orban, & Sgro, 1983) meaning that under conditions of pressure or failure, males tend to be relatively more external in their attributions than females. This finding explains negative outcomes that are related to the incidence of counterproductive behavior. Past research has shown that females consistently exhibit religious behavior more than males (Fiese & Tomcho, 2001; Sullivan, 2001). According to Hickman and Piquero (2001) and Appelbaum and Shapiro (2006) it is well-established that males engaged in deviant behavior more than females.

Religiosity as a Moderator:

Religion is a basic intrinsic motivator in one's life (Salmanpour & Issazadegan, 2012). It is part of a person's life and source of hope. The tendency for people to become attached or practically implement the religion's teachings is called religiosity. There are two types of religiosity, namely; intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. Intrinsic religiosity is how a person experiences religion as an important factor in his life while, extrinsic religiosity refers to how a person would use religion to gain certain goals such as social support by attending religious programs and places of worship (Salmanpour & Issazadegan, 2012). Religiosity is a central force in shaping human behavior (Brotheridge & Lee, 2010). According to the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), one's beliefs can influence one's behavior. It can be expected that one's religious beliefs helps the believer to behave positively. Ventis (1995) found that intrinsic religiosity was associated

positively with appropriate social behavior because intrinsic religiosity is attachment to religion and blending its practice into one's daily life. It frees people from worries and guilt. Hence, the more intrinsically religious a person is orientated; the more stable his emotional well-being. This is because all religions teach their believers to be good in every aspect of life. So, the true believer who follows the original teachings of his religion tends to be a better person. It is found that religiosity plays an important role in reducing workplace deviant behavior. According to Brotheridge and Lee (2010), individuals with high levels of religiosity are more likely to avoid deviant behavior.

A person with a high degree of religiosity tends to be emotionally stable. This is because he believes in God's destiny (Salmanpour & Issazadegan, 2012). The association between religiosity and personality traits has been highlighted by researchers. Studies have found that there is a relationship between religiosity and some characteristics in individuals (Saraglou, 2002). In a meta-analytical study (Saraglou, 2002), it has been found that there is a positive association between emotional stability and religiosity. The higher the orientation towards intrinsic religiosity, the more emotionally stable the person will be. The more emotionally unstable the person is, the more likely he will have irrational beliefs and less able to control the impulses and hence he will be easily exposed to deviant behavior (Salmanpour & Issazadegan, 2012).

Past research has shown that religiosity can moderate the effects of stress (Pargament, 1990) which inadvertently contributes to emotional stability. Therefore, if religiosity enhances the emotional stability of a person, he is less likely to commit deviant behavior. Obviously, we can differentiate the behavioral outcomes of religious people from non-religious people. People with high religiosity tend to be calmer, emotionally stable, kind, and gentle rather than people with low levels of religiosity. Therefore, it would be likely that religiosity may moderate the relationship between emotional stability and workplace deviant behavior. Accordingly, religion acts as a tool to provide a psychological system that can lead to more stable emotions in individuals by strengthening the power of continence. Religiosity is also associated with increased emotional well-being (Hutchinson, Simeon, Bain, Wyatt, Tucker, & Lef'ranc, 2004). Therefore, the tendency to engage in deviant behavior is less. Other than that, religious beliefs are part of self-identity and the value system, thus, it plays an important role in forming workplace attitudes and behaviors (Chusmir & Koberg, 1988).

The assertion that women are generally more religious than men has been supported by a study by Sullins (2006). Rather, men tend to be more irreligious than women due to their general propensity to engage in deviant behavior (Stark & Finke, 2000). Miller and Stark (2002) found that women are consistently showing higher levels of religiosity than men. According to Cornwall (1989), "being religious is said to come naturally to women because the feminine attributes emphasized in Western society are more consistent with religious roles such as: gentleness, nurturance, submission, and conformity to societal roles" (p.117). Apart from that, Miller and Stark (2002) suggested three ways on how women become more religious than men through the socialization process. First, women exhibit nurturance and passivity traits. Second, women are into religiously oriented roles such as caretaker, motherhood, and religious instructor due to traditional gender roles. Third, women are lower than men in terms of the power hierarchy (socially and economically). Therefore, they use religion as a coping resource. Miller and Stark (2002) suggested that gender differences in religiosity are related to differences in risk preferences, in other word, to be irreligious is to risk divine punishment (Forthun et al., 1999; Stark, 2002; Whitmeyer, 1998). Men are well known to have a greater propensity to engage in risky behavior and this has been considered the best explanation for gender differences in crime and deviance behavior (Miller & Stark, 2002). However, religiosity plays its role to moderate the relationship between gender and workplace deviance behavior. When a person, either male or female, believes in divine punishment, they tend not to engage in deviant behavior (Stark, 2002). It is therefore expected that religiosity plays a moderating role in the relationship between gender and workplace deviant behavior.

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