

## Workplace Deviant Behavior: A Theoretical Highlights

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### Abstract

The article attempts to discuss the significance and functions of literature review including theories underlie in research especially as guide to young researchers. Basically, the review enables a researcher to have an up-to-date understanding of the research problem, particularly deviant behavior and to avoid him from attempting unnecessarily to understand what has been fully understood. The review will help the researcher to have relevant information of the context of the problem because a problem does not exist by itself, there must be certain relationship with other problems. This is essential when trying to find solution to the problem. The review also exposes the researcher to the related theories that will enable him to plan the research regarding deviant behavior in workplace appropriately. Literature review is performed by browsing the database using keywords; deviant, theory of deviant behavior and workplace deviant behavior. There are several theories that provide a clear picture of workplace deviant behavior such as Social Learning Theory, Social Exchange Theory, General Strain Theory, Mount, Judge and Illies's (2006) model of Workplace Deviant, Conservation of Resources Theory, and Social Control Theory. Understanding through the highlights of this theory can be the basis for a more detailed study of deviant behavior in the workplace, especially in the context of organizations in Malaysia.

**Keywords:** Workplace Deviant Behavior, Theory of Deviant Behaviour.

### Introduction

Workplace deviant behavior is an issue involving various organizations and various groups of employees and workers. This problem is harmful because it brings negative impacts to the organization; either socially or economically. The workplace deviant is increasingly becoming popular issue and attracting the attention of researchers. This indicates that the work culture and environment is becoming increasingly uncondusive to a quality and good service outcome. This issue has long been discussed and is often referred by using a variety of terms. Among the terms that are often used include unproductive behavior, misconduct and anti - social as mentioned by (Kaptein, 2011; Mohd-Samsuddin et al., 2011; Estes & Wang, 2008). Thus, this term can be understood as a form of action or behavior that is prohibited or

contrary to the values and norms of an organization according to (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007).

Deviant behavior in the workplace can be understood as a deliberate desire to cause damage to an organization, more specifically, the workplace. More precisely, workplace deviant behavior refers to behavior that is deliberately committed to go against institutional norms and threaten the harmony within an organization.

Workplace deviant behavior may exist as a result of employees' perceptions of employers or organizations that not giving them appropriate treatment. These employees then begin to exhibit bad behavior as a form of rebellion or revenge against the organization. This deviant behavior may also be viewed as a form of negative feedback from employees. This can be more easily understood as a negative response from the employee to the negative treatment received from the employer. However, there are certain situations where the employee acts to protest by committing deviant behavior although the perception of the employer is wrong. Deviant behavior in the workplace can be manifested in several forms or types; whether the act is violent or not. But it will all affect the productivity of the organization. According to Robinson & Bennett (1995); Robinson & Curtis (2012), deviant behavior, interpersonal as well as organizational both of which although having two different purposes yet still have the same negative impact on the organization. Organizations with deviant behaviors can lead to failure of entire organizational performance, (Dunlop & Lee, 2004; Bolin & Heatherly, 2001). This is because deviant behavior in organizations will lead to employee dysfunction in implementing work ethic, and as a result the organization bears the cost that arises according to (Everton et al., 2007; Harvey et al., 2006).

Interpersonal deviant behavior can weaken social relationships among employees as a result of the psychological stress experienced by victims of such deviant behavior, (Appelbaum et al., 2005; Estes & Wang, 2008). In turn this will give a bad image to the organization and negative implications for the organization itself as well as its employees.

Among the examples of deviant behavior in the workplace are silence, betrayal of co-workers, cyber hangouts. Deviant behavior also have a greater impact such as sexual harassment, corruption and breach of trust.

### **Deviant**

Deviant is actually derived from the Latin word "delinquere" meaning neglected, neglecting which is later expanded to mean being evil, antisocial, committing crimes and breaking rules. It can also easily be defined as behavior that violates the norms of a particular society or does not meet the social values of a group or society according to (Yusof, 1996).

### **Deviant Behavior**

Deviant behavior is defined as behavior that is odd and immoral and unacceptable to society and religion. Deviant, on the other hand, is behavior that violates institutionalized expectations, that is, expectations that are shared and recognized as valid in a social system. Positive behavior refers to the aspect of adhering to or appreciating religious values as well as societal norms. This behavior is to comply with the obligation to perform worship and the practice of good morals in compliance with the norms of society (Yahaya et al., 2005). Positive behavior is the opposite of deviant behavior.

### **Workplace Deviant Behavior**

Robinson and Greenberg (1998), state that negative behaviors that should not be performed by a person are deviant behaviors. Yet the meaning of this deviant behavior is diverse. Although the concepts are almost the same, there may still be some differences between the meanings of deviant behavior. These include organizational misconduct, non-compliant behavior, antisocial behavior dysfunctional behavior in the workplace, unproductive behavior, workplace aggression, and organizational aggression (Peterson, 2002; Robinson & Greenberg, 1998). Yet, every activity is the same in that they violate organizational norms that can have a detrimental effect on the organization and its members (Kidwell & Kochanowski, 2005).

### **Purpose**

The aim of this article is to explain how theories understand deviance in society, particularly in an organisation. Why does deviance occur? How does it affect a society? Since the early days of sociology, scholars have developed theories that attempt to explain what deviance and crime mean to society. When it comes to sociological paradigms, these theories can be grouped according to the three major: functionalism, symbolic interactionism, and conflict theory.

Many studies have tried to identify the causes of deviant behavior in the workplace. Accordingly, this literature review has been done by focusing on the theories underlying the understanding of such deviant behaviors. Research on these theories is done to gain a clearer understanding of deviant behavior, from the perspective of psychologists and sociologists. An understanding of these theories will be able to provide a clearer guide to researchers who want to unravel the problem of deviant behavior that is increasingly prevalent in organizations today. In addition, the highlight of this theory also aims for a detailed understanding of the concept for a training planning and improvement of work culture in organizations.

### **Methodology**

Literature review was conducted through searches in several databases such as Google Scholar, Science Direct, Researchgate, UPM eTheses, Emerald Insight, NCBI Resources, Psychiatric Science, LOOK Academic Open access and Springer Link. A total of 66 articles were searched using the keyword deviant, deviant behavior. However, only 30 articles were selected for the study, all of which are related to a more specific terminology, namely deviant behavior at workplace. The 36 articles that have been excluded at this stage are articles that focus on deviant behavior among children and adolescents. However, regular reading is done to get a clearer picture of the differences in the definition of context and population. Article selection is then limited to those that have a discussion related to the theory underlying the understanding of the study or article writing. Articles that did not have a discussion of theory were excluded from the literature selection for the purposes of this concept paper. Finally, 13 most accurate articles were identified and selected as theoretical references for future research purposes, of which 13 articles have discussed 6 fundamental theories related to understanding of deviant behavior at workplace.

Table 1

*Literature Review*

<b>No</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Significance of The Study</b>	<b>Theory/Model</b>	<b>Research outcome</b>
1	Alias	Predictors of workplace deviant behaviour and the mediating role of job satisfaction among support staff in Malaysian Local Authorities	Support staff workplace deviant behaviour has been at its highest percentage compared to other categories of employees in Malaysia.	Mount, Judge and Ilies's Theory Social Exchange Theory Affective Events Theory General Strain Theory	Job satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between perceived organizational support, and job autonomy on workplace deviant behaviour.
2	Ahmad et al	Reducing Deviant Behaviour Through Workplace Spirituality and Job Satisfaction	A need for organization to create a culture of spirituality to avoid workplace deviant behaviour	Social Exchange Theory Social Control Theory Mediation model	This model suggests that spirituality plays an important role in organizations and influences employee attitude and behavior.
3	Adeoti et al	Effects of Occupational Stress and Workplace Spirituality on Workplace Deviance in Academia: A conceptual paper.	To propose a framework and propositions to be tested in future studies.	Effort-reward imbalance (ERI) Model Social Control Theory	Proposed a framework guided by Social control theory and effort-reward imbalance model with encouraging workplace spirituality as an antidote to deviance in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)
4	Azim et al	The Role Of The Religious Factor As A Moderator In The Relationship Between Factors Of Work And Deviant Behaviour	Deviant behaviour in the workplace should mitigate because it will give negative impact to the organization.	Social Control Theory	Religiosity tasks conflicts, workload, work stress, work-family conflicts

5	Alias et al	Towards Developing A Theoretical Model On The Determinants Of Workplace Deviance Among Support Personnel in The Malaysian Public Service Organizations	Develop a theoretical model on the determinants of workplace deviance among support personnel.	Cognitive Social Theory  Social Exchange Theory	Theoretical model on the determinants of workplace deviance among support personnel.
6	Radzali	Factors Associated with workplace Deviant Behaviour In A Public Organization In Malaysia And Moderating Roe Of Religiosity	Workplace Deviant Behaviour has negative effects on the organizations financial status and wellbeing.	General Strain Theory	There were significant relationship between emotional stability, job stress and workload and workplace deviant behavior. Religiosity plays a moderating role in the relationship between emotional stability and not to job stress and workload.
7	Zia-ur-Rehman	Linking Ethical Leadership to Employees' Performance: Mediating Role of Organizational Citizenship Behavior and Counterproductive Work Behavior	To find relationship of ethical leadership and employees' performance through mechanisms such as counterproductive work behavior and organizational citizenship behavior of employees	Social Learning Theory  Social Exchange Theory	The results of current study indicated that ethical leadership effected employees' job performance. This study suggested novel discoveries, the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' job performance was not mediated by

					organizational citizenship behavior of employees. However, ethical leadership and employees' job performance was mediated by counterproductive work behavior of employees in public sector institutions.
8	Mo et al	Linking Ethical Leadership to Employee Burnout, Workplace Deviance and Performance: Testing the Mediating Roles of Trust in Leader and Surface Acting	Recent studies have indicated that employees tend to be less stressed and have greater job satisfaction when they work under a leader who acts as a principal source of ethical guidance.	Conservation of Resources Theory	This study offers an important contribution to the ethical leadership literature by demonstrating the value of ethical leadership in managing employees' negative attitudes and behavior in the work- place.
9	Aryati et al	The influence of ethical leadership to deviant workplace behavior mediated by ethical climate and organizational commitment	The results of previous studies could not show any solid evidence about the ethical and undistorted behavior produced as a result of ethical leadership pattern. By that, it is actually a research gap that is interesting to be revealed.	Social Learning Theory	It is found that ethical leadership could influence the formation of ethical climate in an organization which in turn will negatively affect the deviant behaviour in the workplace. The results also indicate that the effect of ethical leadership is either direct or indirect toward the deviant

					behaviour in the workplace. The indirect impact of this ethical leadership includes the sharpened perception of ethical climate which eventually will reduce the deviant behaviour in the workplace.
10	Jiang et al	The Relationship between Authoritarian Leadership and Employees' Deviant Workplace Behaviors: The Mediating Effects of Psychological Contract Violation and Organizational Cynicism Hongyan	The majority of previous research has concentrated on the relationship between employees' personality traits (e.g., O'Neill and Hastings, 2011; Zhang et al., 2015) and their DWB. However, very little empirical research has been done on the link between leadership style and employees' DWB.	Social Exchange Theory	The results showed that the relationship between authoritarian leadership and employees' DWB was mediated by organizational cynicism. Moreover, this relationship was also sequentially mediated by psychological contract violation and organizational cynicism. This research unveiled psychological contract violation and organizational cynicism as underlying mechanism that explained the link between authoritarian leadership and employees' DWB.

11	Alias et al	Organizational Predictors of Workplace Deviance among Support Staff	The study seeks to examine the influences of organizational-related factors among 220 support staff in a Malaysian government organization.	Social Exchange Theory	Organizational Justice,  Perceived organizational support,  Trust in organization.
12	Khan et al	How Perceived Supervisor Support Effects Workplace Deviance? Mediating Role of Perceived Organizational Support	This study is imperative for policy making in order to overcome counter-productive behaviors among front-line employees in both public and private banks of Pakistan. However, outcomes of this research are limited to the Pakistani context	Organizational Support Theory  Social Exchange Theory  Social Learning Theory	Perceived Organizational Support.  Perceived Supervisor support.
13	Gruys	The Dimensionality of Deviant Employee Behaviour In The Workplace	Knowledge of the relationships between various deviant employees behaviours will eventually contribute to more effective prediction and prevention of employee deviance in the workplace.	Social Learning Theory	Results of principal components analysis using the self ratings suggest a strong common factor underlying all of the categories of deviant behaviour. Personal characteristics, Employee Perceptions and Attitudes, Situational and Organizational Factors.



For the purpose of article selection, several criteria have been identified from the beginning as follows:

Article selection criteria:

1. Proper operational definition of the concept; workplace deviant behavior.
2. Focus on the theory underlying each study or article writing.
3. The study population was adult individuals working in the organization.

Article exclusion criteria:

1. The study population was among children and adolescents.
2. The article does not discuss theories or models.
3. The theory used is not related to deviant behavior in the workplace.

## **Discussion**

From the research that has been done, there are several theories that discuss deviant behavior in the workplace. Such theories view workplace deviant behavior from a sociological and psychological perspective. The psychological perspective finds that an individual is unable to restrain or prevent himself from engaging in behaviors that can give him satisfaction, once his wishes have been successfully fulfilled. While the sociological perspective sees deviant behavior as a criminal behavior that violates the norms that have been bound by society. Many researchers have used these theories in their research related to deviant behavior in the workplace. Such theories and models are used as a basis in developing the conceptual framework in the study. Here are some theories that can be fundamental to understanding deviant behaviour in the workplace namely (1) Social Learning Theory, (2) Social Exchange Theory, (3) General Strain Theory, (4) Mount, Judge and Illies's (2006) model of WD Theory, (5) Conservation of Resources Theory, and (6) Social Control Theory.

### **Social Learning Theory**

Social Learning Theory was introduced by (Bandura, 1977). According to this theory, the effect of ethical leadership on subordinates is developed through the process of role modeling as well as by observing the behavior of the leader. Leaders acting as trustworthy role models, and at the same time having the power to punish or reward, will influence the behavior of their subordinates. Aryati et al (2017) conducted research on this matter and the results proved that the higher the application of ethical leadership, the lower the intention of subordinates to commit deviant behaviors. This theory also suggests that individuals learn appropriate ways to act and behave through the process of role-modeling by observing the behavior of others. Leaders in organizations are often considered legitimate models for normative behavior. In addition to direct observation, employees are also influenced by their leaders because those leaders have powers regarding punishment and reward for ethical and unethical behavior.

### **Social Exchange Theory**

Social Exchange Theory is one of the most influential theories in understanding employee behavior. The theory developed by Blau (1986) describes employee motivation in exchanging behaviors and attitudes between employees and employers including organizational citizenship behaviors and perceived organizational support. This theory predicts that individuals are more likely to be dissatisfied if they receive poor treatment from the organization. As a reciprocal norm, employees will respond with destructive behavior with conditions that are unfavorable to their organization. This theory also suggests that the higher

the organization meets the socioemotional needs of employees, will influence employees in determining the improvement of their efforts in helping the organization (Ahmad & Omar, 2014; Alias, 2013).

### **General Strain Theory**

General Strain Theory by Agnew (2006) sees that strain becomes the most important current contributor to an individual's negative behavior in the workplace. These strains are divided into three categories: First, failure to achieve a complete goal, exclusion of valued stimuli, and presentation of harmful stimuli. Second, habituation variables that can impact individuals encounter non-deviant or deviant behaviors when exposed to stress. Third, the idea that negative emotional states can generate impulses to act deviant as a way to reduce the effects of stress if positive adjustments or coping strategies are not available. The main idea in this theory is that individuals overcome negative emotions in reducing tension through destructive behavior. Strain refers to conditions that are disliked by individuals that contribute to a variety of negative emotional states including irritability, irritability, depression and aggressive behavior (Agnew, 2006, 2009). To reduce stress, they may commit deviant behavior in the workplace and may sometimes attack their co-workers (Brezina, 2017).

### **Mount, Judge and Illies's Model of WD Theory**

In this theory, a workplace deviant model is used, and job satisfaction is used as the mediating variable between individual factors and workplace deviant. Researchers emphasize that certain individual factors are related to deviant behaviors in the workplace e.g (Ahmad, 2014; Alias, 2012; Farhadi, 2011; Golpavar, 2015; Leweherilla, 2017; Radzali & Ibrahim, 2011).

### **Conservation of Resources Theory**

Conservation of Resources Theory introduced by Hobfoll (1989) explains about the general stress that depends on whether individuals struggle to maintain, achieve, defend, things or resources they value. Resource values vary between individuals and are influenced by their experiences as well as situations. For example, some individuals see religion or spirituality as a valuable resource while for other individuals, they may not appreciate it. Resources have intrinsic and instrumental value. It consists of materials (e.g. income), circumstances (e.g. work environment), personal resources (e.g. self-efficacy) and energy resources (e.g. involvement). When a loss or threat of loss occurs, the individual involved will endeavor to avoid further loss. These can affect an individual's health, well-being, and behavior (Shenjiang & Junqi, 2015).

### **Social Control Theory**

According to the Social Control Theory introduced by Hirschi (1969) individuals are prevented from engaging in deviant behavior through their bond with social institutions such as family and religion, as well as spirituality in the workplace. This theory can be used in studying the level of spirituality of individuals towards their attitudes and behaviors in the workplace. This theory describes the factors that can hinder a criminal activity or deviant behavior. Bonding with social groups such as family, school, and peers has been associated with a lower propensity for antisocial behavior. Deviations from social norms are explained by Hirschi based on four specific concepts: attachment, commitment, involvement, and trust. Attachment, meaning the extent to which a person is socially attached to parents, peers,

teachers, religious leaders and other members of society is the most important element of social bonding. Commitment represents a social, professional and economic investment in a conventional society. Involvement refers to active participation in prosocial activities that leaves little time for social misconduct. The fourth concept, belief, theorizes that the more a person believes in social norms, the less likely they are to behave contrary to it (Aminah & Zoharah, 2014).

### **Theories and Understanding of Deviant Behavior**

Research on the theories and findings of previous studies allows the researcher to estimate the position of his study in the context of the problem area of the study and the contribution that will be given by the study to be implemented. Here, an examination of these theories related to deviant behavior will provide views from different angles (psychological and sociological views) on a common problem and explain the weaknesses that need to be addressed. In addition, the understanding of this theory can also be used as a guide to assess the state of deviant behavior that is happening, as well as to evaluate the implementation of a plan that has been or will be implemented related to this issue, especially in the workplace. To understand a problem from the point of view of its cause, knowledge of historical background and related theories is necessary. The historical sequence will explain the developments in the field. While 'theoretical preliminaries' will determine the relevant data that needs to be collected. A study of a problem takes place in particular as well as in depth. This of course requires a solid theoretical preparation.

### **Conclusion**

Deviant behavior is a problem that exists everywhere, in families, schools and the workplace, among children, adolescents and even adults. This matter requires the attention and action of all parties to address it. This is because such deviant behavior can damage an individual, an institution or society as a whole. It can also disrupt human life systems, individually and collectively. There are various factors or causes that lead to the occurrence of deviant behavior in the workplace, employer-employee relationships, workplace environment, job satisfaction and stress levels, and more. Although many theories and articles conclude that individual factors and employer-employee relationships are among the major contributing factors, more detailed studies need to be done to find the most critical causes of this problem and subsequently find the best solution to overcome them. There are still many gaps for further research, the results of which can later be used as a guide to plan and implement a model or a form of intervention that is best and effective.

In short, the highlights of past studies including theoretical highlights conducted in a robust, intensive and extensive manner will enable researchers to understand this problem of deviant behavior comprehensively either from a theoretical point of view, as well as from an environmental or contextual point of view. The robust highlighting will facilitate the subsequent review process and may also shorten the study period of this deviant behavior as the researcher already has the theoretical strength that will assist him in the process of processing and analyzing the collected data. In other words the researcher knows what is needed and how to do it. Thus he will be able to conduct research more independently.

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