A Preliminary Study of the Effects of Personality Traits on Workplace Deviance in the Voluntary Sector

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to empirically investigate a set of personality traits in relation to workplace deviance among volunteers at one of the Malaysia's Emergency Relief departments. A cross-sectional survey was conducted with self-reported questionnaire. The participants were 200 volunteers attached to six emergency relief centers in Peninsular Malaysia. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 19.0 software. Data analysis procedures; descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment correlation and hierarchical multiple regression analysis were conducted. The findings confirmed the importance of taking personality traits into consideration during the process of recruitment of volunteers to minimize workplace deviance. This study contributes on the crucial role of volunteers' personality traits that can be an imperative factor to minimize workplace deviance.

Keywords: Personality, Volunteer, Deviance
JEL Classifications: J23, L31

1. INTRODUCTION

Workplace deviance is defined as voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and, in doing so, threatens the well-being of the organisation or its members, or both (Bennett and Robinson, 2000). It has been estimated that workplace deviance had cost organizations millions of dollars each year (Johnson and Indvik, 2001) and (Sandberg, 2003) found out that American organizations may have spent about $50 billion annually due to employee theft and fraud. Workplace deviance is an expensive phenomenon for an organization, and scholars have researched on this behaviors using different terms such as counterproductive work behavior (Waheeda and Hafidz, 2012; Sulea et al., 2013), anti-social behavior (Carlo et al., 2014; Chory and Hubbell, 2008) and work aggression (St-Pierre and Holmes, 2010; Lee and Brotheridge, 2011). Indeed, only a handful of scholars have focused on Asian context (Farhadi et al., 2012; Smithikrai, 2014) and the link between personality traits on workplace deviance (Layth and Zulkarnain, 2016; Kozako et al., 2013). Prior to this, a meta-analysis by (Berry et al., 2007) showed personality traits has potential to influence an employee to engage in

workplace deviance. However, it is unclear whether the personality traits of volunteers provide unique prediction of workplace deviance in the voluntary sector. Most volunteer organizations required their supporters to be willingly to share their expertise, manpower and financial resources (Knickerbocker, 2015), thus the choice of where to focus their knowledge, human capital and other intervention efforts is an important decision (O'Neill et al., 2011; Knickerbocker, 2015). To ensure the organisation efforts be efficient to help the people in need, there is a need for the organisation to determine whether the personality traits of volunteer is related to workplace deviance because workplace deviance is detrimental to organizational productivity and performance.

In light of the influence of personality traits on volunteering behavior (Carlo et al., 2005), the purpose of this current study was to determine whether the personality traits of volunteer is a valid predictor for explaining and understanding workplace deviance. This will assist the organisation to save on considerable amount of human capital and financial resources in considerations of decision-making.

In an attempt to determine which personality traits of volunteer that related to workplace deviance, the current study makes two contributions. First, this study answered to the call for workplace deviance research in non-profit context (Nair and Bhatnagar, 2011); the aim of this study is to examine if the personality traits correlated with workplace deviance using sample of volunteers at one of the national Emergency Relief departments. Next, whereas the workplace deviance typology was developed in the West (Bennett and Robinson, 2000), this study has contribute to an understanding of the role of personality traits in determining workplace deviance in the Asian context.

2. PERSONALITY TRAITS AND WORKPLACE DEVIANCE

Organizations have spent many resources in attempt to predict workplace deviance at the time of hire (Ones, 2002). According to (Mount et al., 2006), deviant behaviors at workplace are likely to be subjected to individuals' personality traits rather by ability-related factors because individuals make conscious choices when they are to or to not engage in deviant behaviors. In the area of research on personality, the five factor model (FFM) has been identified as the most widely used and empirical supported personality measure in industrial psychology (Salgado, 2002). Specifically, agreeableness reflects the degree of one's sense of cooperation and social harmony; conscientiousness refers to the way in which we control, regulate and direct our impulses; extraversion concerns to a pronounced engagement with the external world; neuroticism or low emotional stability refers to one's tendency to experience negative feelings; and openness to experience describes imaginable and creative individuals (Johnson and Ostendorf, 1993).

The FFM has been linked with varieties of workplace deviance, however the empirical results remain inconsistent (Cullen and Sackett, 2003; Ones et al., 2003; Salgado, 2002). (Berry et al., 2007)'s meta-analysis indicated that agreeableness and conscientiousness were the strongest predictors of overall workplace deviance score where agreeableness predicted interpersonal deviance and conscientiousness predicted organizational deviance. Moreover, (Bolton et al. 2010) found that agreeableness, conscientiousness and extraversion were valid predictors of workplace deviance where agreeableness was a valid predictor of interpersonal deviance and conscientiousness predicted organizational deviance. These empirical findings however were contradicted with workplace deviance in Asian context. For example, in a study using hotel employees in Malaysia (Kozako et al., 2013) found extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism and openness to experience were valid predictors of interpersonal deviance, while agreeableness, neuroticism and openness to experience to be valid predictors of organizational deviance. Layth and Zulkarnain (2016) only found emotional stability (opposite trait of neuroticism) to have positive and significant effects on counterproductive work behavior while the traits of agreeableness and conscientiousness have no significant effect on counterproductive work behavior.

Conversely, Santos and Eger (2014) have conducted an online survey at a project management consultancy firm in Singapore

and they only found extraversion to be a valid predictor for interpersonal and organizational deviance but not agreeableness and conscientiousness This suggested an inconsistency of predictors to workplace deviance and therefore a systematic investigations of whether personality traits of volunteers at the Emergency Relief departments may offer empirical findings that probably absent in the past studies of workplace deviance.

3. METHODS

For this study, the cross-sectional data was gathered by two-stage cluster sampling of 300 volunteers. The survey questionnaires were self-distributed by the first author from six Emergency Relief centers in Klang Valley, and 200 sets of questionnaires were returned to the author deemed complete, and this yield a 66.7% response rate. Prior to conducting the study, written consent was obtained from headquarter of Malaysia's Emergency Relief department. The participants were assured that the data collected would adhere to strict standards of confidentiality, anonymity and data protection. The researcher had coordinated with the center coordinator to distribute and collect back the questionnaires at agreed time.

The independent variable in this study was the FFM personality traits and the dependent variable was workplace deviance. Personality traits was rated by each participant using the 44-item scale from (John and Srivastava, 1999). Scales comprised of eight items of agreeableness ($\alpha = 0.61$), conscientiousness ($\alpha = 0.63$), extraversion ($\alpha = 0.67$), neuroticism ($\alpha = 0.60$) and nine items of openness to experience ($\alpha = 0.65$). Response options ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The 19-item workplace deviance scale developed by (Bennett and Robinson, 2000) was used to measure workplace deviance. Response options were on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (daily). Nine items measured interpersonal deviance ($\alpha = 0.84$) and twelve items measure organizational deviance ($\alpha = 0.80$). The averaged interpersonal and organizational deviance scores were computed to be overall workplace deviance ($\alpha = 0.90$). The data collected were screened, reverse coded and analyzed using the SPSS version 19.0 whereby descriptive statistics, Pearson moment correlation coefficient and hierarchical multiple regression analysis were performed. After examining previous studies on workplace deviance, three demographic factors i.e., sex, age and tenure have impacts on workplace deviance (Hemdi and Aizzat, 2006; Berry et al., 2007), these three factors were controlled in the statistical analyses.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Participant's Profile
A total 200 returned completed, 105 (54.1%) were males and 89 (45.9%) were females. For the entire sample (Table 1), the respondents' age were between 18 to 35 years old and most of them were very new (<3 years) to the centre.139 (71.6%) were currently single and 55 (28.4%) were married, 142 (73.2%) had completed at least higher secondary education, 44 (22.7%) completed certificate or diploma and 8 (4.1%) have completed their degree. For the entire sample, the mean age was 27.6 years

with a standard deviation of 9.31 years and on average, participants have been involved as volunteer for 3.02 years with a standard deviation of 4.30 years.

4.2. Factor Analyses of Study Variables

A principal component analysis with Varimax rotation was conducted to validate the underlying structure of personality traits. In interpreting the factors, only items with a loading of 0.40 or greater one on factor are considered (Field, 2000). Out of the 44 items, 21 items were excluded from further analysis due to low factor loadings. The results of the factor analysis revealed that 23 items loaded on five factors solution and the total variance explained was 58.78%. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.859 indicating sufficient inter-correlations while the Barlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 1861.557$, $P < 0.01$). Factor 1 comprised of four items related to agreeableness (i.e., is helpful), Factor 2 consisted of five items related to conscientiousness (i.e., does a thorough job), Factor 3 encompassed of four items related to extraversion (i.e., is outgoing), Factor 4 consisted of five items related to neuroticism (i.e., can be moody) and finally, Factor 5 consisted of five items related to openness to experience (i.e., has an active imagination).

Another factor analysis was undertaken to examine the dimensionality of the dependent variable. The results of the factor analysis revealed that 19 items loaded on two-factor solution as originally conceptualized by (Bennett and Robinson, 2000) where the total variance explained was 54.32%. One item of was excluded due to its high cross loadings. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.905 indicating sufficient inter-correlations while the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 2183.387$, $P < 0.01$). Factor 1 consisted of seven items related to interpersonal deviance (i.e., made fun of someone at work) and Factor 2 comprised of 11 items related to organizational deviance (i.e., put

4.3. Mean, Standard Deviation, Inter-item Correlations and Reliability

Table 2 reported the means, standard deviations, reliability and zero-order correlations the study variables. From Table 2, the mean scores for the personality traits of agreeableness (M = 4.00, SD = 0.76), conscientiousness (M = 3.93, SD = 0.64), extraversion (M = 3.73, SD = 0.73), neuroticism (M = 2.87, SD = 0.78) and openness to experience (M = 3, SD = 0.68). Respondents of this study indicated a low level of workplace deviance with mean scores of 1.58, 1.41 and 1.46 for the interpersonal, organizational and overall workplace deviance respectively.

The reliability coefficients for all study variables from the factor analysis is acceptable and above 0.7 (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013; Field, 2000). Results indicated that extraversion has significant positive correlation with interpersonal deviance (r = 0.20, P < 0.05) and overall workplace deviance (r = 0.20, P < 0.05), while neuroticism has significant positive correlations with interpersonal deviance (r = 0.27, P < 0.05), organizational deviance (r = 0.27, P < 0.05) and overall workplace deviance (r = 0.29, P < 0.05). However, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience were found not significantly correlated with any dimensions of workplace deviance. Finally, the correlation coefficients between the workplace deviance dimensions were positively significant, ranging from 0.69 to 0.94 (P < 0.01).

To determine whether the personality traits of volunteer predict workplace deviance in the Emergency Relief department, five personality traits were regressed on to three models of workplace deviance separately. Table 3 indicated the controlled variables of age, sex and tenure explained 8.9% amount of variance in interpersonal deviance, 1.7% amount of variance in organizational deviance and 4.7% amount of variance in overall workplace deviance. When personality traits of agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism and openness to experience were added to the model, an additional of 9.1% increase in interpersonal deviance variance (Fchange = 4.119, P > 0.05); an additional of 8.0% increase in organizational deviance variance (Fchange= 3.276, P < 0.01); and an additional of 8.9% increase in overall workplace deviance variance (F=3.790, P < 0.01). First, the personality traits of agreeableness was found to have a negative effect on interpersonal deviance (β =−0.227, P < 0.05). Second, extraversion was found to have positive effect on interpersonal

Table 1: Participants' profile

Demographic variables	Categories	Frequency (%)
Sex	Male	105 (54.1)
	Female	89 (45.9)
Marital status	Currently single	139 (71.6)
	Married	55 (28.4)
Educational level	O'Level and below	142 (73.2)
	Certificate/diploma	44 (22.7)
	Degree	8 (4.1)
	Mean±SD	
Age (year)	27.55±9.31	
Tenure (year)	3.02±4.30	

Table 2: Mean, standard deviation and inter-item correlations

Variables	Mean±SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	4.00±0.76	(0.76)						
2	3.93±0.64	0.71**	(0.71)					
3	3.73±0.73	0.64**	0.67**	(0.74)				
4	2.87±0.78	0.13	0.10	0.25**	(0.67)			
5	3.81±0.68	0.70**	0.73**	0.70**	0.22**	(0.74)		
6	1.58±0.67	−0.01	0.05	0.20**	0.27**	0.09	(0.85)	
7	1.41±0.54	−0.01	−0.03	0.10	0.27**	0.02	0.69**	(0.90)
8	1.46±0.54	−0.01	0.01	0.15*	0.29*	0.05	0.90**	0.94**

**P<0.01, *P<0.05; values in the parentheses indicated Cronbach's alpha. 1: Agreeableness, 2: Conscientiousness, 3: Extraversion, 4: Neuroticism, 5: Openness to experience, 6: Interpersonal deviance, 7: Organisational deviance, 8: Overall workplace deviance

Table 3: Results of hierarchical multiple regression analyses

Variables	Interpersonal deviance		Organizational deviance		Workplace deviance	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Control variables						
Age (Year)	−0.354**	−0.299**	−0.142	−0.077	−0.258**	−0.194*
Sex (1=Male)	−0.063	−0.069	0.045	0.048	−0.001	−0.002
Tenure (Year)	0.174*	0.197*	0.056	0.085	0.116	0.144
Model variables						
Agreeableness		−0.227*		−0.040		−0.121
Conscientiousness		0.014		−0.105		−0.058
Extraversion		0.265*		0.177		0.228*
Neuroticism		0.194**		0.250**		0.240**
Openness to experience		−0.003		−0.056		−0.041
R^2	0.089	0.180	0.017	0.097	0.047	0.136
Adjusted R^2	0.075	0.145	0.002	0.058	0.032	0.098
R^2 change	0.089	0.091	0.017	0.080	0.047	0.089
F change	6.182**	4.119	1.112	3.276**	3.138*	3.790**

$**P<0.01; *P<0.05$

deviance ($\beta = 0.265$, $P < 0.05$) and overall workplace deviance ($\beta = 0.228$, $P < 0.05$). Finally, neuroticism has positive effect on interpersonal deviance ($\beta = 0.194$, $P < 0.05$), organizational deviance ($\beta = 0.250$, $P < 0.05$) and overall workplace deviance ($\beta = 0.240$, $P < 0.05$). The personality traits of agreeableness, extraversion and neuroticism are valid predictors of interpersonal deviance, neuroticism predicted organizational deviance and lastly, extraversion and neuroticism predicted overall workplace deviance.

5. DISCUSSION

The objective of this study is to empirically investigate a set of personality traits in relation to workplace deviance among volunteers at one of the Malaysia's Emergency Relief departments. The results showed that the personality traits of extraversion and neuroticism have significant positive relationships with workplace deviance. This finding implies that volunteers' personality trait plays an important role in determining their individual behavior at the volunteer organisation. These findings were consistent with past study that personality traits (particularly extraversion and neuroticism) are positively correlated with interpersonal deviance and workplace deviance (Santos and Eger, 2014; Kozako et al., 2013) which indicated that they are more likely to engage in deviant acts when they scored high in these personality traits.

The results also revealed that the personality traits of agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience have no significant relationship with workplace deviance. This findings seems to contradict with past results. One plausible explanation for the non-significant relationship could be due to the high scores these personality traits (i.e., agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience) have implies their tendency to share, volunteer and help others may deter them to be not interested in acts that harming other volunteers and/ or organization. Finally, the regression findings also suggested that personality traits appears to explain greater variance in interpersonal deviance rather than organizational deviance (Berry et al., 2007). Thus, the study suggests that continued

attention be paid to the personality traits to inhibit workplace deviance.

6. IMPLICATION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

From a practical point of view, it is concluded that in order to deter volunteers to engage in workplace deviance, managers of this volunteer organisation shall select and screen individual with traits that are prone to workplace deviance as this will assist the organisation to retain their volunteers, fostering positive workplace and to allocate funds for their human capital development.

Several theoretical and methodological limitations of this study should be addressed. First, this study utilized personality traits where future research is needed to take into consideration of other individual's personality determinants such as heredity, environment and situation factors which may be significantly associated with workplace deviance. Second, methodologically, the use of cross-sectional and self-report data may have resulted in common method variance, although Berry et al. (2007) meta-analysis has found no significant effect on the estimates on workplace deviance. In addition, the sample was derived from one of the national volunteer organizations that provide emergency relief services; as a result the findings may not be generalized to other samples or industry. Future research could possibly seek to replicate our study as well as to examine the inter-play of individual-related factors and job-level characteristics in determining the interaction effects on workplace deviance.

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