

Types and Causes of Deviant Workplace Behaviour in Public Organization in Malaysia

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Accepted: 15 May 2021 | Published: 1 June 2021

Abstract: *Deviant workplace behaviour is a paradox issue at universal level. Deviant workplace behaviour need to be studied by scholars to reduce harmful effects to employees such as job dissatisfaction, low performance, turnover intention and stress among employees. On the other hand it also involves high social and economic cost towards the organization. The aim of the study is to explore types and its causes of Deviant workplace behaviour at law enforcement agency. Data was collected among police officers in Selangor state involving various departments. The study found “at risk behaviour” was a cause of 2 types of misconduct such as alcohol consumption and drugs.*

Keywords: Deviant workplace behaviour, Law enforcement agency

1. Introduction

Scholars have argued that the understanding of DWB (deviant workplace behaviour) need to be investigated among managers and organizations to minimize work withdrawals among business and government agencies (Loi, Loh & Hine, 2015). It will affect organization and employees in many ways such as organization cost will be increasing with regard to theft, computer fraud, vandalism, sabotage and embezzlement, performance of the organization will be affected. On the other hand employees will suffer from psychological effects, which can harm their well-being and there will be high turnover or intention to quit (Appelbaum, Iaconi & Matousek, 2007).

Basically DWB means dysfunctional behaviour or another term unethical behaviour. This explains the capacity to evolve from an individual or team characteristic into corrupt practices at an organizational and institutional level if egotistic climate (Kish-Gephart, Harrison & Trevino, 2010) and cronyism (Begley et al., 2010) persists in socialization behaviour.

DWB needs to be studied by researchers and managers, otherwise organizations will be facing low work productivity (Syaebani & Sobri, 2011). Moreover DWB needs to be studied among employees at public sector because they are the main groups of employees of a country (D’ Silva et al., 2020). This article aims to add new dimensions of deviant workplace behaviour on types and causes in a police force.

Research Objective

The aim of the study is to identify types of DWB and its causes influencing law enforcement officers at various departments and job positions. The urge of the study is crucial due to the fact that employees are facing high workload and work tensions.

2. Literature Review

An Overview of DWB in general and police deviance

Robinson & Bennett (1995, p.556) defined DWB as voluntary behaviour of organization members, which violates significant organizational norms and in doing so, threatens the well-being of the organization or its members or both". Bennett et al., 1995 found different types of workplace deviance reflects different level of deviance (Malini, 2016). Similarly D'Silva et al., (2020) also mentioned typology of Bennett (1995) ranges from negligible to extremely significant. Previous studies showed Bennett et al., (1995) typology has four quadrants such as political deviance, personal aggression, production deviance, property deviance. There are two types of deviance such as interpersonal deviance and organizational deviance. Interpersonal deviance is overt and harmful to individuals whereas organizational deviance is negative behaviour which harms the organization.

However, Martin (1996) defined police deviance as an act of violence and terror. Examples such as answering phone calls with a "yeah", neglecting to say "thank you" or "please", using voicemail to screen calls and standing impatiently over the desk of someone engaged in a phone conversation. Next Ross (2011) termed it "As an act of discrimination, misconduct, intimidation, sexual harassment, corruption, excessive of force, use of restricted weapons and illegal surveillance". Furthermore Dean, Bell and Lauch as (2010), explained there are 3 types of police deviance such as i) police misconduct (gratuity, improper use of police resources for personal use, security breaches, obscene and profane language). ii) Police corruption (taking bribe, fixing a criminal prosecution, drug dealing, police abuse and brutality). iii) Police predatory (extorting money from the public or from criminals by providing protection and other services).

Therefore definition of concepts vary among scholars. Bennett et al., (1995) covers DWB in general and applies to all types of organizations. But Martin (1996), Ross (2011) and Lauchs et al., (2010) focuses on specific law enforcement officers only.

Causes of Police Deviance

A number of theories were used as the foundation in studies pertaining to police deviance. One of the most prominent theories is the Anomie theory developed by Robert Merton in 1957. This theory was named as strain theory in the beginning, later changed to Anomie theory soon it was popularized by Emile Durkheim. He argued that self-interests and desires of citizens in a society can be controlled by forces that originate from the individual. These forces are the ideas, values, norms, ideologies and benefits of the culture, institutionalized in the social structure and internalized by individual members of the group. Durkheim believed that if an individual lacks any source of social restraint, that person would tend to attempt to satisfy personal needs, disregarding the possible effect this might have others in society (Solomons, 2010). In order to meet the ends, an individual behaves in such a way that he or she does not think or care for others. In other words a person's ambition and desires is a state in which the person has no moral restraint. Thus leading to anger, bitterness and frustration will lead the person to antisocial behaviour (Downes, 1999).

3. Methodology

The study adopted qualitative approach. It is set to explore experiences of police officers involved in the phenomenon and the data, which serves as a point of interest to the researcher. It is to explore types and factors contributing to police deviance. The interview was semi-structured guided.

Data collection analysis

A sample of 7 respondents who have working experience as police officers were selected for this study. Purposive sampling was used for data collection. Researchers selected officers who were more than 6 years in service. Because they will have more experience and can provide with more data on this sensitive topic. During interview probing questions were used to collect insightful information.

Analysis

The interview duration with the respondents took between 30 minutes to 60 minutes. All the interviews were audio taped and transcribed. It uses inductive category coding with concurrent comparison of all meanings gained in the process of coding to determine, similarities and differences. This method enables the researcher to identify themes systematically as they appear from the data (Merriam, 2009). The vital part in this interview was the researcher wanted to explore and identify types of DWB with its causes. Therefore participants were encouraged to share their experiences conveniently on the subject discussed.

4. Findings and Discussions

Tables 1: Participant Profile

Respondent	Gender	Job position	Experience
1	Male	Middle level	11 years
2	Male	Middle level	9 years
3	Male	Low level	11 years
4	Male	Low level	15 years
5	Male	Middle level	6 years
6	Male	Middle level	8 years
7	Male	Middle level	14 years

The current section presents the results of this exploratory study, arranged in context to the research objective. What are the types of DWB and its causes at workplace among law enforcement officers?

Findings revealed alcohol consumption and drug usage were types of deviance occurred among the officers and categorized as “at risk behaviour”.

Participants of this study understood “at risk behaviour” it as destroying health or well-being of an employee itself.

Findings of the study identified at risk behaviour as (i) alcohol consumption, (ii) drugs

Alcohol consumption

Respondent 1, emphasized that the consumption of alcohol is basically not good for health but there are cases whereby officers indulged in these cases accidentally. As for respondent 2, saw it as frequent type of deviant behavior at his workplace. He has witnessed alcohol is one of the types that I have observed among the officers in the agency. It is wrong to consume alcohol while working.

Respondent 1 further narrated his experience how officers are involved in alcohol consumption. “It is understood many people (public) want to make friends with the police officers. When there are many friends eventually enjoyment (alcohol) will be an offer to the police”.

He further explained that enjoyment can come in many forms. Alcohol is a type of enjoyment, which is offered by the public to police officers.

Besides that, respondent 2 also reported consumption of alcohol is primary at his workplace. From his perspective drinking problem.....is common types of deviant behaviour. Joined police force officers have no rights to consume alcohol and can be transferred”.

Drugs

Misuse of drugs is also known as substance abuse. The user consumes the substance in amounts, which can harm themselves and others. In most cases, deviant behaviour occurs when the person is under the influence of drugs and this will affect their personality in long term. Respondent 3 and respondent 4 had received cases of misuse of drugs. According to their experiences some of the newly recruit officers were drug addicts before joining the police force. They (newly recruit officers) can involve in drugs again if they meet up with their old friends (public). Aw views taking drugs at his department is normal means it is a common type of DWB.

Respondent 3 mentioned he has caught 3 to 4 cases. Majority of cases were taking drugs.

Followed by respondent 4 described how officers involved in drugs. “Before entering into the police force, they were addicts. It involves both levels of officers (middle and low). They will stop from taking drugs once they are selected as police officers for training. Once they have completed training they are free to involve in drugs addiction. Taking drugs is something normal.....”.

Respondent 4 observed that taking drugs is common because he has reported few cases and some are under investigation. He said it is undeniable and some officers are addicted. “They can stop it if it is not heavy. Those who meet up old friends will involve again. But those I have arrested were addicts before joining police force”.

Causes of “at risk behaviour”.

The major cause of “at risk behaviour” is due to internal factor such as lack of upbringing and teaching.

(i) Lack of up-bringing and teaching

Lack of up-bringing and teaching in this study refers to not having religious belief, faith in god, educating children with ethics and moral values. Participants understand it as having lack of faith in god, lack of education and lack of discipline can make an individual involve in unethical behaviour.

Respondent 5 and respondent 1 conveyed that religion plays an essential role in one’s life. The upbringing of parents, care and affection will shape up a person to be ethical in conduct. It does not matter which branch he or she is posted to.

Respondent 5 affirmed that “lack of faith may lead them to indulge in bribery and drugs. With good religious upbringing and parents who are ok, whichever branch a person is posted to, I think he or she’ ll be ok”.

Respondent 1 mentioned “Islam prohibits (taking of alcohol)... This is due to lack of faith. When there are many offers, the environment (encourages bad behaviour)”.

Respondent 6 and 7 further explained lack of civic education is a cause of deviant behaviour. Therefore officers need to educate themselves and they have to be aware of what is happening around them.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

It is proven from the above explanation that informants from different departments witnessed more than one type of deviant workplace behaviour. The findings of the research question relating to this study is to add to the understanding of the new types of DWB among various position of officers. It is discovered “at risk behaviour” such as alcohol consumption and drugs are new types of misconduct which was not mentioned by Robinson & Bennett’s (1995) typology. On the other hand police studies by Martin (1996), Ross (2011), Lauchs et al., (2010) has identified drugs usage as a police corruption. Whereas alcohol consumption was not considered as a misconduct by the western studies. But from Malaysian perspective alcohol consumption is a misconduct. Therefore organizational culture plays a significant role in determining types of DWB at workplace.

Secondly informants of the study regard lack of up-bringing and teaching is a cause of DWB. However in literature it was found Anomie theory emphasized ideas, values, norms, ideologies and benefits of the culture will motivate an individual to indulge in misconduct or DWB. This is to study their own personal needs of an individual. Therefore this study has added one more dimension that is up-bringing and teaching is another cause of DWB. If an individual is not educated and cared well by their families will lead to negative behaviour or misconduct

Conclusion

The findings of the study have shown that alcohol consumption and drug usage harms an individual. It is caused by lack of upbringing and teaching. An individual is influenced by alcohol consumption and drugs due to stress at workplace. It is understood by providing good teaching and educating moral values can hamper bad habits of an individual. This can promote health and well-being of an employee and increase productivity at workplace.

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