



Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Citizenship Behavior as Antecedents of Students' Deviance

Shaiful Annuar Khalid (Corresponding author)

Faculty of Business Management, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), 02600, Arau, Perlis, Malaysia
Tel:60-12-5140-436 E-mail: dr_shaiful@yahoo.com

Kamsol Mohamed Kassim

Faculty of Business Management, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), 02600, Arau, Perlis, Malaysia
Tel: 60-19-5505-432 E-mail: Kamsol@perlis.uitm.edu.my

Mohammad Ismail

Faculty of Business Management, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), 02600, Arau, Perlis, Malaysia
Tel: 60-4-9861-001 E-mail: mohammadismail@perlis.uitm.edu.my

Ahmad Nizan Md Noor

Faculty of Business Management, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), 02600, Arau, Perlis, Malaysia
Tel: 60-4-9861-001 E-mail: mohammadismail@perlis.uitm.edu.my

Norshimah Abdul Rahman

Faculty of Accountancy, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), 02600, Arau, Perlis, Malaysia
Tel: 60-4-9861-001 E-mail: shima70@perlis.uitm.edu.my

Rozihana Shekh Zain

Faculty of Business Management, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), 02600, Arau, Perlis, Malaysia
Tel: 60-4-9861-001 E-mail: Rozihana@perlis.uitm.edu.my

Abstract

This study examines the influence of personal factors, emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behaviors on deviant behaviors. The data are taken from 263 undergraduate business students from a public university located on the northern region of Peninsular Malaysia. The findings of this study indicated that sportsmanship and emotional intelligence significantly and negatively associated with deviant behaviors. Our results also indicate that male students and those with lower academic achievement had significantly higher level of deviant behaviors. In the last section, we discuss these results and identify limitations and future research agenda.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Organizational citizenship behaviors, Deviant behaviors, Student

1. Introduction

Deviant behaviors such as cheating and scholastic dishonesty are commonplace in educational institutions (Becker, Rundall & Ulstad, 2009; Zimny, Robertson & Bartoszek, 2008). This situation is of particular concern given that students' moral actions while in university are considered predecessor to their ethical actions after college (Lawson, 2004). There is a growing need to not only promote students' academic achievement but also to emphasize on improving the students' values, norms, competencies and positive work habits for their meaningful future career. In

business circles, untruthful incidents and behaviors among employees at managerial and technical levels are noticed over the world in recent years (Celik, 2009). Deviant behavior is behavior that is a recognized violation of cultural norms. Employees' deviance results in extensive organizational losses. Harper (1990), states that employees engaged in some of the following behaviors: computer fraud, theft, vandalism, sabotage, absenteeism and embezzlement. Deviant behavior among college students may include substance abuse, social deviance, and school-related deviance. Highly deviant students have been shown to experience a variety of negative consequences in terms of academic performance and relationships. It is generally established fact that people do not take action untruthfully as soon as they turn into managers. Since ethical behaviors are shaped partly in educational institutional (Celik, 2009), study on students' deviant behaviors are worth pursuing to continuously identify ways to restrain the behavior. Increasing moral problems in the business world have driven many educational institutions to look for possible factors that influence moral attitudes. Hence, the aim of this study is to evaluate some potential antecedents of deviant behavior among university students. More specifically, we will look at whether personal factors, emotional intelligence (EI) and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) are associated with organizational and interpersonal deviance.

This article is organized as follows: Following this introduction is a literature review on deviant behavior. This will be followed by an explanation of the study's research method and sample selection. Finally, the results are presented along with conclusions and possible implications for academic institutions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 EI and deviant behavior

Robinson and Bennett (1995, p. 556) describe deviance in the workplace as 'voluntary behavior that violates significant norms and in so doing threatens the well-being of an organization, its members or both'. Voluntary or chosen behavior would indicate that the employee is not motivated to conform and/or is motivated to act against established organizational norms. Organizational norms are defined by basic moral principles, formal and informal organizational polices and system (Bennett & Robinson 2000). There are two forms of deviance as identified by Bennett and Robinson (2000) that are organizational deviance which is non personal and is aimed at harming the organization and interpersonal deviance which is interpersonal and detrimental to individuals. Behaviors within each of these types of deviance vary from relatively slight acts to more harsh acts.

Of late, EI has attracted a lot of interest in the academic literature (Charbonneau & Nicol, 2002; Ciarrochi, Deane & Anderson, 2002). EI may be defined as 'the set of abilities (verbal and nonverbal) that enable a person to generate, recognize, express, understand, and evaluate their own, and others, emotions in order to guide thinking and action that successfully cope with environmental demands and pressures' (Van Rooy & Viswesvaran, 2004, p. 72). People identify their own emotions accurately when they, for example, know that they are irritated with another person or embarrassed. Those with high level of EI are able to control and avoid themselves from doing such misbehaviors that will harm the organization they work with. Research suggest that people with high levels of EI engage less in deviant behaviors (Petrides, Frederickson & Furnham, 2004) than those with low EI. Similarly, Eisenberg (2000) states that low trait of EI may be a key factor in a variety of deviant behavior. Liau, Liau, Teoh and Liau (2003) found that EI was linked to deviant behaviors among secondary school students. Previous research have also found that higher scores of EI are associated with higher quality interpersonal relationships (Brackett, Warner & Bosco, 2005), academic performance and social competence (Brackett, Rivers, Shiftman, Lerner & Salovey, 2006) and important workplace outcomes such as stress tolerance and peer and/or supervisor ratings of interpersonal facilitation (Lopes, Cote, Grewal, Cadis, Gall & Salovey, 2006). Lower scores are linked with drug use, alcohol consumption and deviant behavior (Brackett, Mayer & Warner, 2004).

Based on the above-mentioned studies and theoretical discussion we can reckon that EI might have an influence on deviant behavior.

2.2 OCB and deviant behavior

The basic mechanisms explaining why the individuals' level of OCB may influence deviant behavior can be drawn from the general cognitive consistency theory. The cognitive consistency theory (Festinger, 1957) proposes that individuals try to sustain harmony between their behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes. There is an inclination for individuals to seek consistency among their cognitions. The term cognition as used by Festinger pertains to any knowledge, opinion, or belief about the environment, about oneself, or about one's behavior.

Why OCB should be related to deviant behavior? To better understand these effects, we must examine the nature of OCB and deviant behavior. Since the practice of citizenship behavior is discretionary, a good organizational citizen can be considered as an all-round giver – the ones who are not only good in accomplishing prescribed duties such as attending classes and submitting assignment but also assist those around them by helping others students, being good sports or exhibiting high levels of civic virtue and conscientiousness. In addition, an active behavioral involvement in a social group (e.g. helping other students and educators, always willing to lend a hand or stand for inconvenience at

university) should also reflect the students' positive attitudes in various aspects and a strong organizational identification. In contrast, students who are not socially integrated will be less attached to the university (Tsui, Egan & O'Reilly, 1992).

On the other hand, deviant behaviors are regarded as undesirable and are potentially harmful to one's colleague, work groups and organizations. Since, OCB reflects voluntary behavior that is beneficial to universities, whereas deviant behavior is considered as resentment toward the university, we would expect that OCB and deviant behavior to be adversely related, consistent with the cognitive consistency theory. The positive attitude and behavior as reflected through a high level of OCB should be aligned consistently and shape other attitudes and behavior, for example, by having lower deviant behaviors. As an individual's OCB decreases, that individual's tendency to engage in deviant behavior increases. The distinct nature of OCB and deviant behaviors suggest that a high level of deviant behaviors are incompatible with a high level of citizenship behavior but is not inconsistent with low level citizenship behavior. Given the relative support for the cognitive consistency theory across a variety of situations and the underlying principle of cognitive consistency that people value harmony among their feelings and behaviors, it is predicted that this theory would provide a support for the OCB and students' deviant behaviors. A limited study has also supported a negative relationship between OCB and deviant behaviors. Bennett and Robinson (2000) found that conscientiousness and courtesy were significantly related to organizational and interpersonal deviance.

Given the above, we propose that students' deviance can be predicted by OCB.

2.3 Personal factors and deviant behavior

Research has also explored the impact of a wide range of individual factors such as gender, age, personality traits and employees' perceptions of unfairness on the occurrence of deviant behavior (Martinko, Gundlach & Douglas 2002). Younger peoples and males tend to be more prone to engage in overt acts of deviance (Harris & Ogbonna 2002) and will overuse display rules by faking and engaging inauthentic behavior (Grandey, Dickter & Sin 2004). Research has confirmed that students' who are more attached to teachers, more devoted to school, and have stronger beliefs in the school's norms will exhibit higher academic achievement and less deviant behavior (Payne, Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2003). Studies of parenting also found that low family income and maternal hardship impede children's cognitive and social competence. Moreover, parents in poor living environments have difficulty defending their children, increasing the likelihood that children will incline into school give up, early sexual experience, use of drugs and other deviant behavior (Evans, 2004).

Based on the above-mentioned studies and theoretical discussion we can reckon that some of the personal factors such as gender and academic achievement might have an influence on students' deviance.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample

This research involved a cross-sectional survey design. The subjects were recruited from a public university located on the northern region of Peninsular Malaysia. The sample for this study consisted business students. These voluntary surveys were administered in the classroom after the class ended and completed the survey. Students were assured of confidentiality. Overall, a total of 263 students participated in the survey, although the actual sample size varies depending on the variables involved in the various analyses. Approximately 23 percent of participants were males and 77 percent females. The mean age is approximately 22.3 years.

3.2 Measurement

The independent variable of the present study is OCB. Each of the five constructs: altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, conscientiousness and civic virtue included items describing specific behaviors. These dimensions have been conceptualised by Organ in 1988 and selected for this study because they have been most frequently examined by researchers (LePine, Erez & Johnson, 2002; Schnake & Dumler, 2003). Overall, there were 20 items adapted from Podsakoff and MacKenzie (as cited in Niehoff & Moorman, 1993). The wording of the items was modified to accommodate the context of the present study. Each dimension of OCB was scored by obtaining the average rating of its component items. The scales have been found to have sufficient levels of reliability and validity (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1994). The second independent variable, that is, EI was measured using Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test by Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden and Dornheim (1998) comprises of 33 items. Deviant behavior was measured using 14 items adapted from Aquino, Lewis and Bradfield (1999). This measurement comprises of two categories, where item 1 to 6 were measured on interpersonal deviance and item 7 to 14 were measured on organizational deviance. All items were rated on five-point Likert scales. Respondents were also required to report background information such as gender, cumulative grade point average (CGPA), current semester and family income. Bivariate correlation was used to test the relationship between the study variables. Multiple regressions were utilized to test the main effect of each OCB dimensions and EI on students' organizational and interpersonal deviance.

4. Data Analysis and Results

Descriptive statistics such as maximum, minimum, means, standard deviations, and variance were obtained for interval-scaled independent and dependent variables. The results are shown in Table 1. From the result, it may be seen that the mean on organizational deviance and interpersonal deviance were rather low (1.64 and 2.10). The mean on sportsmanship is about average (3.08) whereas the means on courtesy, civic virtue, altruism and conscientiousness and emotional intelligence are perceived as somewhat enriched. The minimum of 1 indicates that there are some who do not engage in deviant behaviors at all and the maximum of more than 4 indicates that some are seriously engage in organizational and interpersonal deviance. The variance for all variables is not high indicating that most respondent are very close to the mean on all variables.

Insert Table 1

The effects of personal characteristics on subjects' deviant behavior were analyzed using t-test analysis. The results are shown in Table 2. For family income and CGPA, both variables are split at the median into lower and higher. For semester, students pursuing first to third semester are categorized as lower semester whereas students at the semester four to six are categorized as higher semester. Results of t-tests found that there is a significant difference between male and female on both organizational and interpersonal deviance. Male students reported significantly higher organizational and interpersonal deviance. In term of CGPA, students' with lower CGPA reported significantly higher interpersonal deviance than students' with higher CGPA. There were no significant differences on both deviant behaviors based on semester and family income.

Insert Table 2

Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations for the 14 items measuring the deviant behaviors. Overall, all the item means are below the mid-point of 3. The highest means were 2.85 (gossiped about my lecturer) and 2.47 (made an obscene comment or gesture at a classmate).

Insert Table 3

The intercorrelations of the variables are shown in Table 4. Internal consistency is stated in parentheses. The Cronbach-alpha range from .68 to .85, which suggested the specified indicators are sufficient for use (Nunnally, 1978). As can be seen from Table 4, the measure of both deviant behaviors significantly correlated with sportsmanship and EI. The negative relationship indicates that high sportsmanship levels and EI were more likely to result in low deviance among students. Civic virtue, courtesy, altruism and conscientiousness were not significantly related to deviant behaviors. The intercorrelations were also inspected for multicollinearity. All correlation coefficients were below .70. Therefore, variable redundancy did not appear to be of concern (Nunnally, 1978).

Insert Table 4

To test whether OCB dimensions and EI influence organizational deviance, a multiple regression analysis was done. The results of regressing the six independent variables against organizational deviance can be seen in Table 5. As can be seen, the set of independent variables accounted for approximately 12% of the variance in students' organizational deviance. However, only EI ($\beta = -.17$, $t = -2.45$, $p < .05$) and sportsmanship ($\beta = -.28$, $t = -4.59$, $p < .01$) were significantly and negatively related to student deviance.

Insert Table 5

To test whether OCB dimensions and EI influence interpersonal deviance, another regression analysis was done. The results of regressing the six independent variables against interpersonal deviance can be seen in Table 6. As can be seen, the set of independent variables accounted for approximately 8% of the variance in students' interpersonal deviance. However, only sportsmanship ($\beta = -.26$, $t = -4.15$, $p < .01$) was significantly and negatively related to students' interpersonal deviance.

Insert Table 6

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The main objective of the present study was to examine the relationship between various facet of OCB and EI on students' deviance. The present study found that sportsmanship significantly and negatively related to both, organizational and interpersonal deviance. The finding of this study is generally consistent with a previous research by Bennett and Robinson (2000). The results show a clear tendency for students' deviance to be elevated when sportsmanship is weak. This is consistent with the study's predictions. Employees' who exhibit low level of sportsmanship are more likely to engage in deviant behaviors. It appears that sportsmanship is the OCB dimension that benefits the general organization (e.g. avoid complaining or willing to face difficulty) rather than specific individuals. The implication is that a student's who exhibits good sportsmanship by not always finding fault with what university is doing not focusing on what is wrong with his/her situation, not neglecting in work coordination, not complaining about

trivial matters or making a “mountain out of molehills” is more likely to have lower tendency to engage in deviant behaviors than those who do not exhibit sportsmanship. A student’s who dislikes complaining, does not indulge in petty grievances or rail against real or imagined slights, reflects that the person is willing to face hardship together with the university, and has high organization attachment or identification. This study contributes to the deviance literature by providing a new evidence of the effect of sportsmanship on deviant behaviors. The present study found no support for the effect of other OCB dimensions on deviant behaviors. It is possible to speculate that since the bivariate analysis showed a weak correlation between these variables and deviant behaviors, this relationship is not strong enough to hold up in the multivariate analysis. Based on the result for this study, it is also proved that there was a significant negative relationship between emotional intelligence and interpersonal deviance. In other words, when emotional intelligence is high, the tendency of deviant behavior to happen is low. This result was in line with the previous finding from Petrides et al., (2004) and Deshpande and Joseph (2005). Respondents with low EI were less likely to perceive such behaviors as gossiping the lecturer and made an obscene comment or gesture at a classmate as unethical. These results suggest that people with low EI relatively have lower moral standards. Additionally, the findings of this study that found male tend to engage in more deviant behaviors is consistent with some previous study (e.g. Harris & Ogbonna, 2002). The finding that students’ with lower CGPA reported higher levels of deviant behavior is interesting. Probably those who do not excel at their study may have higher tendency to engage in some forms of deviance as ways to improve their academic performance. This is also in line with Payne, Gottfredson and Gottfredson (2003) arguments that students’ who are more closed to teachers, more dedicated to school, and have stronger beliefs in the school's norms will demonstrate higher academic achievement and less deviant behavior. What makes the present findings especially appealing is the nature of the variables, which concerned behaviors of ‘real-world’ significance. If deviant behavior can be tackled in advance, we may be able to shaped graduates with improved values and norms. Perhaps the insertion of trait EI measures and sportsmanship in assessment studies and intervention programs aim at undergraduates might lighten deviant behavior. Ethical behaviors are universal values and should be internalized through the educational process. Character building should therefore be supported by guides and norms within appropriate learning environment. Educators, administrators and parents should take the responsibilities. The content of professional disciplines such as business management should be enhanced by courses on religiosity, ethic and philosophy so that university students could deal with the complex future working situations. Helping students to understand their own personal ethical viewpoints and related effects of EI and sportsmanship may better prepare students for future employment. This study intensifies the important role that EI and sportsmanship may have in alleviating deviance among students. Several limitations constrain the interpretation and application of the study’s findings. The aim of this study to explore the deviance among students from one university is also a weakness. Future studies may be benefited from an exploration of a wider range of students at different universities. The reader is cautioned to recognize the limitations of relying on self-reported data. This may carry a bias of general method variance. In this study, limitation about costs prevented the used of larger size of sample. Most of the previous research examining deviant behavior has focused on samples of employees. Future research need to expand this study to samples of students. Another interesting area of future research is the impact of some demographics factors as moderators. Researchers may also conduct longitudinal study to provide strong evidence of the association between current deviant behavior and future workplace deviant of same group of respondents.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Study Variables

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Organizational deviant	261	1.00	4.75	1.64	.60	.36
Interpersonal deviant	259	1.00	4.50	2.10	.70	.50
Altruism	262	1.00	5.00	3.25	.54	.29
Courtesy	262	1.00	5.00	3.49	.58	.34
Sportsmanship	262	1.00	5.00	3.08	.62	.38
Conscientiousness	262	1.00	5.00	3.23	.69	.48
Civic virtue	262	1.00	5.00	3.30	.67	.45
Emotional intelligence	253	2.91	4.85	3.72	.33	.11

Table 2. Differences in Deviant Behaviors by Personal Factors

Personal characteristics	Mean			
	Organizational deviance	t-value	Interpersonal deviance	t-value
Male	1.85	3.16**	2.31	2.58*
Female	1.58		2.04	
Lower CGPA	1.70	1.46	2.25	2.87**
Higher CGPA	1.59		1.20	
Lower semester	1.70	1.05	2.17	.71
Higher semester	1.61		2.10	
Lower family income	1.68	1.50	2.09	.11
Higher family income	1.57		2.10	

Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviations for Deviance Items

No.	Question	Mean	SD
1	Made an ethic, racial, or religious slur against a classmate.	1.70	1.04
2	Swore at a classmate.	1.94	.98
3	Refused to talk to a classmate.	1.75	.93
4	Gossiped about my lecturer.	2.85	1.23
5	Made an obscene comment or gesture at a classmate.	2.47	1.12
6	Teased a classmate in front of other students.	1.88	1.04
7	Intentionally arrived late to class.	2.19	1.11
8	Called in sick when I was not really ill.	1.69	.88
9	Took undeserved breaks to avoid work during class.	1.72	.91
10	Made unauthorized use of university property.	1.52	.84
11	Left class early without permission.	1.24	.71
12	Lied about the number of hours I worked on assignments.	1.55	.77
13	Worked on a personal matter on the group project instead of doing for my group.	1.64	.79
14	Purposely ignored my lecturer's instruction.	1.56	.83

Table 4. Intercorrelation Between Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Altruism	-	(.73)							
Courtesy	.44**	-	(.68)						
Sportsmanship	-.08	-.11	-	(.71)					
Conscientiousness	.17**	.34**	.01	-	(.78)				
Civic virtue	.38**	.42**	-.04	.46**	-	(.77)			
6. Emotional intelligence	.28**	.47**	.03	.20**	.31**	-	(.85)		
Organizational deviance	.10	.01	-.31**	-.08	.02	-.14*	-	(.82)	
Interpersonal deviance	.03	.02	-.28**	-.06	-.06	-.09	.61**	-	(.79)

** p<.01 *p<.05

Cronbach alphas in parentheses

Table 5. Regressions of OCB Dimensions and EI on Organizational Deviance

Variables	β	t	Sig.
Altruism	.10	1.47	.14
Courtesy	.02	.21	.84
Sportsmanship	-.28**	-4.59	.00
Conscientiousness	-.09	-1.36	.18
Civic virtue	.06	.75	.45
Civic virtue	-.17**	-2.45	.02

*p<.05 **p<.01

R² .12Adjusted R² .10

F value 5.62**

Table 6. Regressions of OCB Dimensions and EI on Interpersonal Deviance

Variables	β	t	Sig.
Altruism	.03	.45	.65
Courtesy	.04	.56	.58
Sportsmanship	-.26**	-4.15	.00
Conscientiousness	-.02	-.26	.79
Civic virtue	-.06	-.83	.41
Civic virtue	-.09	-1.25	.21

*p<.05 **p<.01

R² .08Adjusted R² .06

F value 3.62**