

## **Deviant Workplace Behavior: The Comparison between Employees and Employers at a Government Bank in Thailand**

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**Abstract:** Despite deviant workplace behavior has increasingly become a serious problem in today's organizations and has been reported to significantly affect on both individual and organizational effectiveness and performance, numerous organizations have ignored and not yet prepared to cope with this problem seriously. This present study aims at enhancing the body of knowledge in the area of workplace deviance by exploring the differences between employees and employers at a selected government bank in Thailand. A sample of 143 respondents was gathered for data collection through a modified version of deviant workplace behavior questionnaire. Results of independent samples t-test analysis indicated the significant difference in employees and employers with respect to deviant workplace behavior ( $t = -2.005$ ,  $p = .047$ ). These results suggested that employees were less likely to demonstrate deviant workplace behavior than employers. Discussion, limitations, and recommendations for further studies were also discussed.

**Keywords:** Deviant workplace behavior, hierarchical level difference, government bank.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Despite deviant workplace behavior has increasingly become a serious problem in today's organizations and has been reported to have a significant impact on both personal and organizational effectiveness and performance, which includes psychological, sociological, economic and managerial aspects, numerous organizations have ignored and not yet prepared to cope with this problem seriously [1-4].

Recent studies demonstrated that about 33-75% of employees have been involved with workplace deviance, and these deviant behaviors have caused the massively financial loss [5, 6]. Although numerous empirical studies have reported causes of deviant workplace behavior [7, 5, 8], the emphasis on individual differences, characteristics, and socio-demographic variables has still been inadequate and reported inconsistent results [9-12]. Promsri [13] also suggested that other variables that might be associated with deviant workplace behavior such as socio-demographic variables, task variables, and organizational variables should be investigated in the future study. Furthermore, the focus on socio-demographic differences of employees in both public and private organizations in previous studies has ignored the comparison on hierarchical level differences in deviant workplace behaviors. In the light of this, this present study, therefore, aims at examining the workplace deviance differences between employees and employers.

### **LITERATURE REVIEWS**

Deviant workplace behavior is defined as an employee's intentional action that violates significant

organizational norms and intimidates the health of the organization and its member leading to negative consequences [14]. Organizational behavior deviance is the complex issue as it can produce negative and positive effects depending on the perspectives of the organization and the society [15]. Actions that violate both organizational and societal norms (e.g. workplace aggression, bullying, theft, and cyberloafing) refer to destructive organizational deviance. In contrast, the form of behavior that departs organizational norms but is consistent with societal expectation refers to constructive organizational deviance. Whistle-blowing is a good example of constructive organizational deviance in which employees of the organization reveal unethical and illegal practices of employers to the public. Finn [16] described that workplace deviance happens for various reasons such as the financial problems of employees, employees' jealousy of their colleagues, and inability of personal adjustment to work with employers. These reasons are causes of deviant work behavior, which include gossip, disrespect, stealing and lying, and tardiness and absenteeism. All of these workplace destructive actions result in poor productivity, profit losses, and even loss of business.

Robinson and Bennett [14] proposed the typology of deviant workplace behavior, which was developed based on the combination of two dimensions of deviant behavior relating to the degree of impact (minor or serious) and the level of work deviance (interpersonal or organizational). The mixture of these two dimensions generates four types of workplace deviance: production deviance, political deviance, property deviance, and personal aggression.

- 1) *Production deviance* refers to minor action that may have an impact on the organization's productivity. Negative feelings of employee are viewed as a result of this behavior (e.g. absenteeism, taking excessive break, leaving early, wasting resources, cyberloafing).
- 2) *Property deviance* refers to employee's serious action that violates the organization's property without permission. These severe behaviors include sabotaging equipment, stealing from the company, lying about working hours, and accepting kickbacks.
- 3) *Political deviance* refers to involvement in social relationship that situates personal and political disadvantages to individuals. Favoritism, gossiping, and blaming co-worker are examples of this behavior.
- 4) *Personal aggression* refers to serious behavior that harms individuals' well-being and happiness both physically and psychologically. These extreme behaviors encompass sexual harassment, verbal abuse, and endangering co-worker.

Numerous studies used the Robinson and Bennett's typology of workplace deviance to measure causes and effects in different types of organizations. Furthermore, demographic variables have been narrowly investigated as one of key predictors of deviant workplace behaviors. Kumi [10] examined the linkage between socio-demographic factors and counterproductive deviant behaviors. A sample of 174 employees of small and medium companies was gathered by using convenience sampling technique. Demographic variables used in this study were gender, age, marital status, scheme of work, and personality type. Data were analyzed by using cross-tabulations and chi-square test for correlational analysis. The results showed the significant correlations between socio-demographic variables and counterproductive deviant behaviors. However, since this study used convenience sample method to collect data, the use of inferential statistics was not suitable, and violates the generalizability of this study's findings. Sharman *et al.* [11] found the contradictory results of relationship between demographic differences and workplace production deviance of employees in service cluster in India. They reported no significant differences in

gender and age-group, but found significant relationship between occupation and workplace deviance. However, this study failed to report their sampling technique and instruments used for data collection. In addition, Fagbohunge *et al.* [5] studied the relationship between employee's organizational reactions and deviant workplace behavior. Six hundred and ninety six employees in both public and private organizations from various industries in Nigeria were gathered for data collection through the survey questionnaires. Measure of Workplace Deviance (MDW) developed by Bennett and Robinson [1] was used to collect data. This study reported the acceptable Cronbach's alpha score for the scale measurement. Results of independent samples t-test analysis indicated the significant difference in deviant behavior of males and females. Female employees were reported to have higher score on production deviance, personal aggression, and political deviance than males. Also, multiple regression analysis demonstrated that organizational reaction variables were significantly associated with deviant work behavior of employees.

Past studies of workplace deviance have focused not only on the employees in private organizations, but also extended their interests in investigating people in public organizations. Anwar *et al.*, [9] conducted their study on workplace deviant behavior of males and females university lecturers. Deviant workplace behavior scale measurement developed by Bennett and Robinson [1] was used for data collection. A total of 50 lecturers who worked in post-graduate level were selected. Results indicated that male lecturers were more likely to demonstrate deviant behaviors than female lecturers. However, this study had a small sample size, and used the mean score to compare the difference between males and females. Hence, the generalizability was not applicable. Promsri [13] examined the relationship between organizational justice and deviant workplace behavior at a selected public university. A total of 71 non-academic staffs were collected through the questionnaires. Using stepwise regression analysis, results indicated the significantly negative relationship between distributive justice and political deviance, and the significantly positive correlation between distributive justice and personal aggression. For deviant workplace behavior, descriptive analysis showed that all dimensions of deviant workplace behavior were in a low level, which political deviance was reported the highest mean score following by production deviance, property deviance, and personal aggression, respectively. This study suggested that other variables that might be associated with deviant workplace behavior such as socio-demographic variables, task variables, and organizational variables should be investigated in the future study. Farhadi *et al.* [12] also studied the role of demographic variables (age, gender, education level, and organizational tenure) on workplace deviant behavior of government officers in Malaysia. A sample

of 212 civil servants was participated in this study. Workplace deviance scale of Bennett and Robinson [1] was used to measure employees' deviant workplace behavior. Independent samples t-test and One-Way ANOVA were used for statistical analyses to examine employees' deviant workplace behavior differences in demographic variables. Findings showed significant differences in age and organization tenure level with respect to deviant workplace behavior.

Despite previous literatures demonstrated the extensive investigation in workplace deviance, especially the focus on socio-demographic differences of employees in both public and private organizations, the comparison on hierarchical level difference in deviant workplace behaviors has been overlooked. The literature reviews suggest conducting the expansion of investigation on deviant workplace behavior differences in organizational position to enhance the body of knowledge in this area. Thus, this present study aims at investigating the workplace deviance differences between employees and employers by proposing the research hypothesis as "there is a significant difference in deviant workplace behavior between employees and employers".

**METHODOLOGY**

One hundred forty-three employees of a selected government bank headquarters in Bangkok,

Thailand were gathered as participants through a survey questionnaire. A modified version of deviant workplace behavior questionnaire was developed based on the concepts of deviant workplace behavior proposed by Robinson and Bennett [14]. This instrument consists of 12-item of a 4-point rating scale ranging from never (0) to always (3) encompassing four dimensions: production deviance, property deviance, political deviance, and personal aggression. This present study calculated a class interval by using the formula for a midpoint in which the highest range minus the lowest range divided by the total ranges. The class interval used to determine the level of mean score interpretation was 0.75, which the mean scores of 0.00-0.75 means very low in demonstrating deviant workplace behavior, and the mean scores of 2.26-3.00 means very high. To ensure internal consistency of this scale measurement, reliability coefficients with Cronbach's alpha test was analyzed. Table-1 exhibited that alpha score of deviant workplace behavior ( $\alpha = 0.882$ ) was highly acceptable [17]. This alpha score was consistent with Promsri's study [13] in which alpha score of 0.934 was reported. After data collection, the researcher keyed all completed questionnaires in the SPSS for statistical analysis. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. To test research hypothesis, independent samples t- test was conducted to discover the differences of deviant workplace behavior between employees and employers of Thai government bank headquarters.

**Table-1: Reliability Coefficients of Deviant Workplace Behavior**

Variables	No. of Items	Alpha Score
<i>Production Deviance</i>	3	0.792
<i>Political Deviance</i>	3	0.627
<i>Property Deviance</i>	3	0.588
<i>Personal Aggression</i>	3	0.706
<b>Deviant Workplace Behavior</b>	12	0.882

**RESULTS**

Out of 400 questionnaires distributed, only 143 were returned with completion, yielding the response rate of 35.75 percent. Amongst 143 respondents, 44 were male respondents (30.8%) and 99 were females (69.2%). For age group distribution of respondents, 56.6% of them were aged 31-40 years, 18.9% aged 20-30 years and 41-50 years, and 5.6% of these participants were aged more than 50 years. For their educational level, 58.7% had completed a bachelor's degree, 30.1% had obtained a master's degree, 4.9% had received a doctorate's degree, and 6.3% of them had reported others for their level of education. Relatively to hierarchical level, 47.6% of respondents were employees and 52.4% were employers. Regarding respondents' working experience in year, 45.5% of them had more than 15 years of working experience,

29.4% had 5-10 years, 14.7% had less than 5 years, and 10.5% of them had 11-15 years of experience in this bank.

Table-2 demonstrated the total mean scores of deviant workplace behavior and each dimension. Results showed that deviant workplace behavior had the mean score in a low level ( $M = .462, SD = .397$ ). To consider mean scores of each dimension of deviant workplace behavior, findings exhibited that all of them had the mean score in a low level. Among these four dimensions, political deviance dimension was reported the highest mean score ( $M = .590, SD = .476$ ) following by property deviance ( $M = .477, SD = .452$ ), production deviance ( $M = .456, SD = .485$ ), and personal aggression ( $M = .405, SD = .471$ ), respectively.

Table-2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Deviant Workplace Behavior

Variables	Mean	SD
<i>Production Deviance</i>	.456	.485
<i>Political Deviance</i>	.590	.476
<i>Property Deviance</i>	.477	.452
<i>Personal Aggression</i>	.405	.471
<b>Deviant Workplace Behavior</b>	.462	.397

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare deviant workplace behavior between employees and employers (Table 3). There was a significant difference in the scores for employees (M = .395, SD = .310) and employers (M = .524, SD = .456);  $t(141) = -2.005, p = .047$ . These results suggested that employees were less likely to demonstrate deviant workplace behavior than employers. To focus on each dimension of deviant workplace behavior, the findings

revealed the significant differences in employees and employers with respect to property deviance ( $t = -2.360, p = 0.020$ ) and personal aggression ( $t = -2.031, p = 0.044$ ). This suggested that employees were less likely to exhibit property deviance and personal aggression than employers. However, there were no significant differences in employees and employers related to production deviance ( $t = -1.760, p = 0.081$ ) and political deviance ( $t = -.601, p = 0.549$ ).

Table-3: Results of the Independent Samples T-Test of Deviant Workplace Behavior

Variables	Employees (n=68)		Employers (n=75)		df	t	p
	M	SD	M	SD			
<i>Production Deviance</i>	.382	.447	.524	.511	141	-1.760	.081
<i>Political Deviance</i>	.485	.408	.533	.531		-.601	.549
<i>Property Deviance</i>	.387	.348	.560	.517		-2.360	.020*
<i>Personal Aggression</i>	.323	.390	.480	.526		-2.031	.044*
<b>Deviant Workplace Behavior</b>	.395	.310	.524	.456		-2.005	.047*

\*Significant Level at .05

**CONCLUSION, DISCUSSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This present study aims at exploring the differences of workplace deviance between employees and employers at a selected government bank in Thailand. A sample of 143 respondents was gathered for data collection through a modified version of deviant workplace behavior questionnaire. Findings showed that the total score of deviant workplace behavior and each dimension were in a low level. Results revealed that political deviance dimension was reported the highest mean score and personal aggression had the lowest mean score. Findings of this present study were consistent with Promsri’s study [13] in which political deviance was reported as the highest mean score and personal aggression was rated as the lowest score. In addition, results of independent samples t-test analysis indicated the significant difference in employees and employers with respect to deviant workplace behavior (particularly, property deviance and personal aggression), which means that employees were less likely to demonstrate deviant workplace behavior than employers. This implies that employers have wrongly thought that they have enough authorities to take bank’s property without permission and can use the bad management styles to threaten their employees [16]. This assumption reflects the misunderstanding of employers’ use of power and HR process. Human resource department should provide the codes of conduct and ethics for all levels of employees

to comply with when working at this bank. Although the score of deviant workplace behavior at this government bank was in a low level, communicating with employees about the negative impact of workplace deviance might be beneficial for the organization in the long term.

As the sample size of this current study was small and limited only samples who worked at the headquarters, the further study should expand the sample size. Also, as alpha score of property deviance dimension was too low, the future study should revise the scale measurement of this dimension, accordingly. Moreover, since this present study focused on hierarchical level variable solely, the next study should also be investigated other socio-demographic and organizational variables that are associated with deviant workplace behavior.

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