

Risk taking
propensity and self
efficacy psychology
essay



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This paper is to establish the relationship between Autonomy in Goal attainment at workplace and positive workplace deviance is mediated by constructs ' Risk taking Propensity' and ' Self efficacy'.

Design/methodology/approach

A survey was circulated through e-mail amongst the people working in IT organizations across various states in India. The survey included questions to gauge the level of autonomy in goal attainment at workplace, their risk taking propensity, their level of self efficacy and a stimulus based questionnaire to gauge the positive workplace deviance. The responses so obtained were analyzed using SPSS

Findings

Risk taking propensity partially mediated autonomy in goal attainment, in relation to positive workplace deviance. Self Efficacy partially mediated autonomy in goal attainment, in relation to positive workplace deviance.

Research limitations/implications

A self-reported, online questionnaire floated to various respondents for the purpose of data collection. Additionally, this study conducted only in the Information Technology Sector within the age group of 22 to 30. The study has been carried out only on the employees of the IT sector and hence cannot be generalized for all industries.

Practical implications

Managers can utilize this study to create a better work culture and human resource practices for an employee in case he/she intends to pursue positive workplace deviance.

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Originality/value

This paper presents the study to examine how positive workplace deviance develops, and what factors cause positive workplace deviance in an organization.

Keywords

Positive workplace Deviance, Pro social Rule breaking, IT Organizations India

Paper type

Research paper

Introduction

What is a rule?

A rule is an explicitly defined policy, regulation or constraint defined by the organization which every employee is expected to follow. Norms, on the other hand, have been defined in the literature as ranges of behaviour that are tolerated or expected by a particular social group (Jackson, 1966; Rushing, 1975).

Workplace is a forum where different individuals interact on a daily basis in order to accomplish goals/tasks. These individuals exhibit different behaviours which might have different consequences for the various stakeholders associated with the workplace. These stakeholders could be peers, clients or the workplace itself.

Rules and norms are a grouping of “ expected behaviours, languages, principles and postulations that allow the workplace to perform at a suitable

pace” (Coccia, 1998). Another researcher has defined Organizational norms to be consisting of basic moral standards as well as other traditional community standards, including those prescribed by formal and informal organizational policies, rules, and procedures (Feldman, 1984).

They are needed in order to establish the common expected standards for all the individuals at a workplace so that the tasks and goals can be accomplished without hurdles.

When the individuals behave in manner other than that defined by these rules and norms, deviance occurs. Researchers have defined workplace deviance as follows:

Workplace deviance is the voluntary behaviour that violates significant organizational norms and, in so doing, threatens the well-being of the organization or its members, or both (Robinson [HYPERLINK “#c65”](#) Bennett, 1995).

Workplace deviance refers to voluntary behaviour in that employees either lack motivation to conform to, and/or become motivated to violate, normative expectations of the social context (Kaplan, 1975).

Though the conventional connotation attached to workplace deviance is negative, through this paper we will try to delve into the positive connotation attached with workplace deviance.

Out of most of the definitions of workplace deviance that exist in the literature, very few are non-negative. The research on deviance in the

workplace overlooks how establishments and their affiliate’s exhibit positive <https://assignbuster.com/risk-taking-propensity-and-self-efficacy-psychology-essay/>

sets of behaviours not merely negative ones (Spreitzer and Sonenshein, 2004).

Even out of the two definitions of the workplace deviance stated above, it can be seen that the first one explicitly defines the term as having a negative outcome. On the other hand, the second definition has the scope for positive interpretation for the term and will help us in this research paper to develop and test the hypothesis for the positive workplace deviance.

Merely identifying a departure from the expected does not reveal anything about the value or merit of the behavior. For example, if an individual departs from norms supporting workplace harassment, it doesn't mean that the individual has acted destructively by merely deviating from the norms.

In order to explore the positive workplace deviance through this paper, we define it as “ intentional behaviors that depart from the norms of a referent group in honorable ways” (Spreitzer and Sonenshein, 2003). In other words, positive deviant behavior must be praiseworthy and must focus on actions with honorable intentions, irrespective of the outcomes (Spreitzer and Sonenshein, 2003).

Positive workplace deviation includes behaviours that although deviate from the rules and norms set by the organizations, but are done on order to benefit either or all of the stakeholders of the organization. These may include behaviors such as innovative behaviors, noncompliance with dysfunctional directives, and criticizing incompetent superiors (Galperin, 2002).

Through this paper we have tried to study the mediation effect of risk taking propensity and self efficacy on the relationship between autonomy in goal attainment and positive workplace deviance.

Research background and hypotheses

Employees often do act out their feelings of disengagement, anger, or entitlement by purposefully violating existing policies and procedures (Giacalone & Greenberg, 1997; Hollinger, 1986; Vardi & Weitz, 2004). But to come to a conclusion that employee rule breaking is always self interested and destructive appears to be a surmise. Employees' performance and motivation may get negatively affected by a rule that is counterproductive or too rigid. In response, employees may decide at times to disregard rules, even though they know that doing so carries risk for them. This is where the concept of positive workplace deviance comes into picture.

Positive workplace deviance

At first glance, “ positive deviance” appears to be an oxymoron (Sagarin, 1985). “ Deviance” is the label we reserve for society's criminals and outcasts.

The origin of the word deviant comes from two Latin words: de means “ from” and via means “ road” so deviate means “ off the beaten path.” Deviant behavior is not expected-it is unconventional. For example let us consider the behavior of a plant manager that would not meet the traditional definition of deviance but that falls under our initial formulation of positive workplace deviance.

Employees at a plant were very concerned about their job security. The feelings of insecurity were creating a poor work climate and impeding the successful launch of a new product. As a result, the plant manager made the decision to promise lifelong employment to the union. This was a radical idea that would clearly not be approved at corporate headquarters. But the plant manager made the promise and proceeded because he knew it was the right thing to do for his people. Today the plant is a world-class operation on every major indicator. It's like there are new people in those bodies. The employees are full of energy. They walk around with a sense of intention. They care about the customer and each other. This kind of extraordinary action is labeled as positive workplace deviance (Wilkins, 1964). Like any normal distribution, the majority of organizational behaviors fall near the middle of the curve (Wilkins, 1964).

Positive deviants are not necessarily rewarded by and are often punished by traditional organizational systems because they go against the established social order (Hechert, 1998; Jones, 1998). Infact, there may be resistance, stigma, or even sanctions targeted at positive deviants from people who closely conform to the norms being violated. Consequently, those who follow established expectations might view positive deviants with suspicion or distaste (Katz, 1972; Mathews & Wacker, 2002; Posner, 1976). Furthermore, the organization will try to push the positive deviant back to behavior more consistent with norms (Quinn, 1996), even if those outside of the organization consider the action honorable. However, those outside of the immediate referent group will often view the positively deviant behavior as

honorable, since the behavior adheres to a higher-level norm and high ethical standards (Warren, 2003).

There are a number of factors that have been posited to affect positive workplace deviance. 'Doing the Job Well: An investigation of Pro-social rule breaking' by Elizabeth W. Morrison includes a number of these factors like empathy, job meaning and autonomy in their study of 'Pro-social Rule breaking'. The intent of this study is not to provide a comprehensive analysis of all these factors, but to advance current research by examining the relationship of autonomy in goal attainment often theorized but yet to be empirically tested with risk propensity and self efficacy.

Autonomy

Autonomy is a concept found in moral, political and bioethical philosophy. Within this context it refers to the capacity of a rational individual to make an informed and un-coerced decision. The concept of Autonomy was developed by Mahler (Mahler et al., 1975; Ericson, 1974; Kohlberg, 1984) as separation, being on one's own and isolation. Amongst other factors higher job autonomy increases an employee's motivation resulting in higher productivity and less turnover and absenteeism (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Spreitzer, 1995). Autonomy is a psychological condition reached at the beginning of adulthood. It is considered as a result of healthy development (e. g., Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975).

Autonomy in goal attainment and Positive workplace deviance

Jobs that provide high autonomy lead to feelings of responsibility, latitude, and self-determination (Hackman&Oldham, 1976; Spreitzer, 1995). Within the context of an organization autonomy reflects the amount of discretion a person has in taking a decision. These decisions when pertain to the independent goal attainment for a person, define the autonomy in goal attainment for an individual (Bieling, Beck & Brown, 2000). This kind of autonomy enables individuals to feel that they have control over how to accomplish their work activities and achieve organizational objectives. These feelings of control and discretion may empower employees to perceive that they can deviate from formal organizational rules and to therefore increase the likelihood of employees disregarding rules when they feel this counterproductive or too rigid (Morrison, 2006). Indirect support for this prediction comes from research showing that a strong predictor of initiative taking is the amount of control in independent goals afforded by one's job (Frese, Garst, & Fay, 2000).

Self Efficacy

Self Efficacy is a person's estimate of his or her capacity to orchestrate performance on a specific task (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). When individuals feel efficacious, they believe that the potential for success outweighs the possibility of failure. Research has found that high levels of self-efficacy are related to the setting of higher goals and firmer commitments to reaching those goals (Bandura, 1989). Strong levels of self-efficacy also cultivate interest and expand choice behavior (Bandura, 1977). When individuals feel

efficacious, they have a hunger to grow and develop to their full potential as human beings. The confidence that comes from being efficacious should facilitate positive workplace deviance. Feelings of competence encourage individuals to set more ambitious goals for themselves, while increasing their commitment to attaining the goals. Because competence cultivates interest and expands choice behavior, it is also likely to help people to think out of the box in a way that allows them to defy norms of conventional business practice.

Self Efficacy and positive workplace deviance

According to various studies self-efficacy has been positively related to positive deviant behaviors (Galperin, 2002). According to them greater is the self efficacy greater is the tendency to engage in positive deviant behaviors (Galperin, 2002). It has been shown that shows that when employees have the support of their colleagues they are more confident of their skills. With this increased self-efficacy, employees are more likely to persist and engage in deviant behavior. Also the confidence that comes from being self efficacious facilitates positive workplace deviance. Feelings of competence encourage individuals to set more ambitious goals for themselves, while increasing their commitment to attaining the goals. Because competence cultivates interest and expands choice behavior, it is likely to help people to think out of the box in a way that allows them to defy norms of conventional business practice.

Autonomy and Self Efficacy

In order for managers to feel confident in their ability to lead change efforts, their jobs need to provide them the opportunity to set new directions, build
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relationships and gain followers' commitment, and take the actions necessary to overcome obstacles. More simply, the manager must have some choice about what to do and how to do it (Stewart, 1982; Yukl, 1994). The presence or absence of job autonomy is goal attainment, among other factors, such as defining goals for the unit, making work assignments, selecting new employees, and controlling expenditures (Hammer & Turk, 1987; Stewart, 1982) affects an individual's self efficacy. In their paper titled ' Self-Efficacy and Managers' Motivation for Leading Change', Laura L. Paglis and Stephen G. Green have established and proven a positive relationship between autonomy in goal attainment and self efficacy.

Thus we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Autonomy positively affects the self efficacy of a person and in turn positively affects the positive workplace deviance of an individual.

Risk Taking Propensity

Risk taking propensity is defined as the degree to which an entity is willing to take chances with respect to risk of loss. Risk taking propensity has also been defined as an individual's risk taking tendencies. MacCrimmon and Wehrung (1990) in their study of executive risk behaviour conceptualized risk propensity in terms of " measures of willingness to take risks" and stresses consistent patterns of risk taking or risk aversion that influence how risk are evaluated and what risks are deemed to be acceptable (Baird & Thomas, 1985). Therefore risk propensity here is defined as the tendency of the decision makers to either take or avoid risks. Past research findings

suggest that there are two determinants of risk propensity or risk taking tendencies. They are:

Risk preferences – individuals' differences in risk preferences have been attributed to a general dispositional risk orientation (Kogan & Wallach, 1964)

Inertia – an individual's orientation towards handling risks tend to persist overtime forming a relatively stable pattern (Kogan & Wallach, 1964)

Both these have been accommodated in the 4 item scale developed by Gomez (1989) that we have used for the purpose of this study

Risk Taking Propensity and Positive Workplace Deviance

Risk taking propensity or courage in simple words has been linked to positive deviance of work as studied earlier by Spreitzer and Sonenshein (2003).

Courage is a willingness to confront risk to do what one thinks is right (Webster's New World Dictionary, 1982). A typical measure of courage might be: "I stand up for what I believe is right, even in the face of risk or ridicule" (Worline). Without a sense of risk, there is no need for courage. Positive deviance often involves significant risk as individuals break out of the rigidity of norms and patterns of expected behaviour. As Quinn (1996) suggests, it requires "walking naked into the land of uncertainty." Consequently, courage provides individuals with the backbone to engage in positively deviant behaviours. Courage stimulates individuals to voluntarily take risks. The propensity to take risk increases as one move outside his comfort zone, beyond the boundaries of his psychological safety net. Courage helps individuals break from the routine flow of activity, to interrupt the tranquillity

and stability of norms, roles, and routines that pattern organizational life (Worline, Wrzesniewski, & Rafaeli, 2002)

Autonomy and Risk Taking Propensity

Independence with respect to taking decisions pertaining to one's goal attainment would yield higher level of risk propensity in an individual.

Autonomy in goal attainment lets a person pursue an action with more enthusiasm and lets an individual be less averse to the risk as compared to an individual who is less autonomous.. This has been supported in literature by Hartman and Nelson (1996) who found that high level of autonomy was present in risk taking groups.

Thus we propose the following hypothesis:

H2: Autonomy in goal attainment positively affects the risk propensity and in turn positively affects the positive workplace deviance.

Autonomy and Positive Deviance

Autonomy plays an important role in explaining principled organizational dissent; a view that casts deviance in a positive light, Graham (1986) explains how individual as well as job autonomy encourages employee efforts to protest and/or change the organizational status quo. In the literature on negative forms of deviance, Vaughan (1990) asserts that autonomy at the organizational level played a crucial role in the Challenger Space Shuttle disaster. She contends that NASA's autonomy interfered with the regulators' abilities to oversee, examine, and properly govern issues of

safety. Thus, theoretical support exists for the relation between autonomy and both positive and negative forms of deviance.

In our study we are trying to study the effect of autonomy on behavioural aspects which in turn lead to positive deviance.

Extraneous Variable

Various studies have identified that there are four main demographic factors that may affect positive deviant behaviour in an organizations (Appelbaum, S. H., Deguire, K. J., Lay, M., 2005). The first factor is gender, it is a common notion that males tend to engage in more aggressive behaviour than females at work leading to a greater tendency for deviant behaviour. Tenure of work is another factor that can be considered, as employees who have joined the organization recently are more likely to engage in positive deviance. Third external variable is education, it has been shown that the more educated the employee is, the less likely they will be involved in deviant behaviors. Last variable identified by studies is the age. The older employees are likely to be more honest than younger employees (Appelbaum, S. H., Deguire, K. J., Lay, M. 2005).

From the four extraneous variables identified by various studies we have considered only gender as the external variable. This is due to the following limitations of our study:

The age group that we have considered is 23 to 27 years. So affect of age cannot be easily studied.

The tenure of our target group is from 2 to 4 years. This shows that all are relatively new to the organization. So the affect of staying for longer periods cannot be studied.

The education of most of the target group is the same i. e. most of them are software engineers as our target group is just fixed t the IT sector.

Methodology

Sample

The sample of the target group that we have taken for this study consisted of 134 respondents from the IT sector. The average age of the participants was 25. 4 years (SD = 2. 14 years), and 25% were female.

Procedure

The participants were given a 25 question questionnaire that was divided into 2 parts. The first part of the survey consisted of 19 questions that assessed risk-taking propensity, self efficacy and autonomy in goal achievement.

The second part consisted of a short scenario that would be likely to lead someone to indulge in positive deviance. The Scenario described a situation in which an employee had to decide whether or not to show positive deviant behaviour by placing an urgent order for a customer. At the end of the, participants responded to six questions that assessed the likelihood of theirs for showing positive deviance.

Design

Positive Deviance was the dependent variable. It was measured using six items that were adopted from the study done by Morrison, 2006 on positive deviance. All six items assessing positive deviance had different labels but all were gauged on a 5-point scale.

Appendix A shows the scenario that was administered to the respondents to gauge their deviant behaviour. The variables were incorporated in the scenario in a disguised manner. For example Autonomy was manipulated by stating that one either feels or does not feel that he or she has freedom to make decisions regarding his or her work

Autonomy in goal attainment, Self efficacy and risk propensity for risk were measured by a separate questionnaire that the respondents were asked to fill as the first part of the study. All three variables were assessed with established measures adapted from previous literatures. Responses were gauged on the 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree).

The survey also assessed gender and age. Only gender was used as the control variable as the age group targeted by us was of a very narrow range (22-30).

Autonomy in goal attainment was measured with the 8-item scale developed by Beck, Epstein, Harrison & Emery (1983). Sample items of the scale are the following: “ If I think I am right about something, I feel comfortable expressing myself even if others don’t like it.” and “ It is more important to meet your own objectives on a task than to meet another person’s objective”
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Using Cronbach's alpha the Reliability of the scale obtained was 0.732 which is higher than the expected standards.

Self Efficacy was measured with a 7-item scale developed by Bandura A. (1977). The original scale developed by Bandura was a 17-item scale but Gareth R. Jones modified reduced the scale to 7 for the purpose of his study. We have adopted this reduced 7-item scale for the purpose of our study. Two examples of items are the following: " I have all the technical knowledge I need to deal with my job, all I need now is practical experience" and " I feel confident that my skills and abilities equal or exceed those of my future colleagues." The scale's reliability as obtained by Cronbach's alpha was 0.635. This is a bit lower than the expected standard of 0.7. This may be due to the fact that the 17-item scale was reduced to 7 items.

Risk Propensity was measured using a 4-item scale developed by Gomez-Mejia and Balkin (1989). Sample items are the following: " I am not willing to take risks when choosing a job or a company to work for," and " I prefer a low risk/high security job with a steady salary over a job that offers high risks and high rewards." The reliability of the scale was acceptable 0.823.

Results

The means, standard deviations, correlations and measures of internal consistency (Cronbach's $\hat{\alpha}$) can be found in the below table. All variables are significantly correlated with each other.

MEAN

SD

1

2

3

4

1. Autonomy in goal attainment

16. 49

4. 302

1

2. Risk Taking Propensity

9. 57

1. 679

. 641**

1

3. Self Efficacy

17. 41

3. 613

. 383**

. 266**

1

4. Positive Workplace Deviance

16. 57

2. 55

. 463**

. 541**

. 611**

1

Notes: **. Correlation is significant at the 0. 01 level (2-tailed).

Autonomy in goal attainment is significantly and positively correlated with risk taking propensity. Autonomy in goal attainment is also significantly and positively correlated to self efficacy and positive workplace deviance. It was also found that Self Efficacy is also significantly and positively correlated to positive workplace deviance. Risk taking propensity is also significantly and positively correlated to positive workplace deviance.

Step 1 in the below table shows the results of regression analysis using Positive workplace deviance as the dependent variable, risk taking propensity as the mediator and the autonomy in goal attainment as the independent variable. This step revealed that Autonomy in goal attainment

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has a significantly positive correlation with positive workplace deviance ($R^2 = 0.315$, $p < 0.01$) and risk taking propensity has a partial mediating effect on positive workplace deviance (\hat{I}^2 change = 0.265).

Step 2 in the below table shows the results of regression analysis using Positive workplace deviance as the dependent variable, self efficacy as the mediator and the autonomy in goal attainment as the independent variable. This step revealed that Autonomy in goal attainment has a significantly positive correlation with positive workplace deviance ($R^2 = 0.659$, $p < 0.01$) and self efficacy has a partial mediating effect on positive workplace deviance (\hat{I}^2 change = 0.195).

Step

Variable

\hat{I}^2

R^2

\hat{I}^2 change

1

First Regression (Positive Workplace Deviance)

Risk Taking Propensity

Autonomy in Goal Attainment

0.414**

0.198**

0.315

0.265

2

Second Regression (Positive Workplace Deviance)

Self Efficacy

Autonomy in Goal Attainment

0.508**

0.268**

0.659

0.195

Notes: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Step 1 and 2 show that the H1 and H2 are supported and the results are significantly correlated. The partial mediating effect was also checked using the Sobel's Test. The partial mediating effect was found to be 4.8 for Risk Taking Propensity and 5.2 for Self Efficacy.

The tables below shows the results achieved when Gender was used as a control variable.

Step 1 in the below table shows the results of regression analysis using Positive workplace deviance as the dependent variable, risk taking

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propensity as the mediator and the autonomy in goal attainment as the independent variable while using gender as a control variable. When only males were selected for the study this step revealed that Autonomy in goal attainment has a significantly positive correlation with positive workplace deviance ($R^2 = 0.642$, $p < 0.01$) and risk taking propensity has a partial mediating effect on positive workplace deviance (\hat{I}^2 change = 0.146).

Step 2 in the below table shows the results of regression analysis using Positive workplace deviance as the dependent variable, self efficacy as the mediator and the autonomy in goal attainment as the independent variable while using gender as a control variable. When only males were selected for the study this step revealed that Autonomy in goal attainment has a significantly positive correlation with positive workplace deviance ($R^2 = 0.620$, $p < 0.01$) and self efficacy has a partial mediating effect on positive workplace deviance (\hat{I}^2 change = 0.368).

Step

Variable

\hat{I}^2

R^2

\hat{I}^2 change

1

First Regression (Positive Workplace Deviance)

Risk Taking Propensity

Autonomy in Goal Attainment

0.468**

0.317**

0.642

0.146

2

Second Regression (Positive Workplace Deviance)

Self Efficacy

Autonomy in Goal Attainment

0.553**

0.095**

0.620

0.368

Notes: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Step 1 in the below table shows the results of regression analysis using Positive workplace deviance as the dependent variable, risk taking propensity as the mediator and the autonomy in goal attainment as the independent variable while using gender as a control variable. When only

females were selected for the study this step revealed that Autonomy in goal attainment does not have a significant correlation with positive workplace deviance ($R^2 = 0.317$, $p > 0.05$) although it has a positive correlation.

Step 2 in the below table shows the results of regression analysis using Positive workplace deviance as the dependent variable, self efficacy as the mediator and the autonomy in goal attainment as the independent variable while using gender as a control variable. When only males were selected for the study this step revealed that Autonomy in goal attainment does not have a significant correlation with positive workplace deviance ($R^2 = 0.682$, $p > 0.05$) although it has a positive correlation. This was observed since the female respondents comprised of only 25% of all the respondents.

Step

Variable

\hat{I}^2

R^2

\hat{I}^2 change

1

First Regression (Positive Workplace Deviance)

Risk Taking Propensity

Autonomy in Goal Attainment

0.157

0. 257

0. 317

-0. 092

2

Second Regression (Positive Workplace Deviance)

Self Efficacy

Autonomy in Goal Attainment

0. 649**

0. 069

0. 682

0. 280

Notes: **. Correlation is significant at the 0. 01 level (2-tailed).

The results of the study show that employee in IT companies are willing to break rules in the interest of the company and the project i. e. to meet important deadlines and request from various clients. This research sheds light on the positive deviance from rules in the organization which are done for the benefit of the organization and not personal benefit. As predicted the participants have a higher tendency towards positive workplace deviance if they have a higher risk taking propensity or higher self efficacy.

Limitations

The limitations of the study are as follows:

Since the sample was restricted to the IT sector only, the results can't be generalized across the sectors

The results might vary in case of Blue Collared employees

The respondents lied between the age of 22-30. Results might vary for a wider range.

All of the respondents held at least a graduate degree in Computer Applications/IT. Results might vary for people with different educational qualifications.

Conclusion and Future Research

This paper contributes to the existing researches by providing logic and empirical evidence as to why workplace behaviors such as autonomy lead to positive deviance. For an organization with high ethical values such behaviors will be viewed as a good personality trait whereas for others they will act be negative traits. In practice, managers will benefit from an integrated approach to deviance, because they will gain a better understanding of the relationship between devian