The Link between Ethical Profiles of Employees and Workplace Deviant Behavior: An individual level Indicator for Productivity and Innovation

Rajeev Malik, Jaya Yadav, Teena Bagga

Abstract: *Workplace deviant behaviors have gained more attention of researchers in recent years, than ever before. The business leaders are witnessing ever-increasing ethical concerns at one end; while dealing with organizational level workplace deviant behaviors which are not healthy for workplaces because they are syphoning off a lot of strength of organizations; which could else wise been utilized in facing the tough competition while presenting a good corporate image. Especially in the manufacturing sector where productivity, efficiency and innovation are key driving factors of success, workplace deviant behavior may play a very significant role in the overall success of the companies. Research shows that WDB is negatively correlated with Individual performances and productivity. There are a number of researchers who have conceptualized a link of workplace deviant behaviors to ethics. However, empirical studies linking both of them in the Indian context are limited. The paper attempts to draw a connection between the psychometric ethical profile of employees to workplace deviant behavior. In other words; the paper attempts to find if ethical profile of employees could predict the extent of workplace deviant behavior by an employee. Quantitative research has been done for purpose of testing the relationship between ethical profile of an employee to his likelihood in exhibiting workplace deviant behavior. Sample size included 141 employees with at least 3 years of working experience in design or technology sectors, so that they could comprehend ethical philosophy as well as comment upon various items presented in the workplace deviant behavior questionnaire. The respondents were requested to respond to a set of items on two scales; one being the Ethical Profile Scale developed by Forsyth (1980) [6] and the other being the Workplace Deviant behavior scale developed by Bennet et al (1997) [4]. Analysis of data was done using SPSS 16 which included Factor analysis, reliability tests and regression between the constructs. The study shows a strong evidence of direct relationship of relativism to likeliness of workplace deviant behavior and inverse relationship between idealism and likeliness of workplace deviant behavior.*

Index Terms: *Ethical profile, idealism, relativism, workplace deviant behavior, individual deviance, organizational deviance.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Some researchers have identified that deviant workplace behavior is a very serious problem in manufacture and service firms [1]. Further, as WDB is classified as both positive and negative depending upon the motive of WDB. Workplace deviance has been defined as voluntary behaviour that violates significant organizational norms and, in so doing, threatens the well-being of the organization or its members, or both [2]. WDB therefore involves two important facets [3].

1. Lack of employee motivation to comply and/or
2. Motivation to violate organizational/social norms

Where norms refer to elementary morals or implicit or explicit organizational rules or policies. WDB is different from ethics in the sense that this happens in a very narrow scope depending upon the leverages and conditions. This means that WDB could be an aberration from reasonable norms, generally executed where it is easiest to execute. The concept is closely related to ethics as it involves a sense of what is right or wrong or could also be a reaction to some organizational treatments. Some factors behind WDB could be supposed unfairness, role modelling or just the excitement [4].

Of the many variables including ethical climates, personal variables, nature of jobs, organizational culture, management control systems, leadership etc; it becomes a hard task to figure out if there could be a strong psychometric predictor to determine if a particular individual was more or less prone to workplace deviant behavior.

Many studies have been done to establish the link between personal level variables to workplace Deviant behavior. However, there is a dearth of studies that have tried to conceptualize workplace deviant behavior with respect to the ethical philosophy of the individuals.

A. Need for the research

Ethics and workplace deviant behavior have recently been in centre stage of research in organizational behavior. The reason is that many organizations feel plagued with ill effects connected to workplace deviant behavior of members. Since WDB concerns ethics and ethics are directly shown to have impact on innovation and productivity it becomes even more important for manufacturing companies whose strengths are bAsed on innovation and productivity.

There is, therefore, a need to have deeper insights into the phenomena and how it can be understood and handled, for current and future leaders.

As per Hofstede's typography US ranks high (91) on individualism, whereas India ranks in very low on individualism [5]. Therefore, though a relationship between the ethical profiles and workplace deviant behavior been studied in the US, a separate research is needed for a country like India.

Therefore there is a need to do a study in India, to see how the dimensions connect in countries with collectivist cultures.

B. Practical implications

Within sights into the relationship between the construct of ethical profiles and workplace deviant behavior, a plausible intervention could be worked out and this, in turn could be of help organizations enormously in terms of both tangible and intangible gains.

It could be used in recruitment, selection, orientation, succession planning, training, learning, career progression and delegating of important task within the organization by the leaders.

It could also help in defining or developing the ethical climate of the organization and an organizational bonding based on trust.

Efficiency, effectiveness and the ability of the organization to act as a whole while responding to the environment could be the consequential rewards for the organizations and their leaders.

II. METHODOLOGY

A convenience sampling plan was used in the empirical study. Data was collected from over141 respondents, who belong to the millennium generation and are currently employed. All the respondents held a graduate degree. For getting responses, the researchers themselves served the questionnaires to 86 respondents who were in direct personal contacts with the researchers. The rest of the responses were collected through college students, who were briefed about the study and were requested to collect data from their personal contacts. Responses were collected on a 9 point likert scale.

The respondents were requested to mark their answers on two questionnaires one which tested their ethical philosophy and another which sought their non-acceptance to a set of workplace deviant behaviors. For example to an item namely 'Making fun of someone at work' if a respondent responded 9; it meant that this was completely acceptable to the respondent.

The assumption underlying was that the degree of acceptability of a WDB to a respondent also was indicative of how much the respondent may himself or herself indulge in such a WDB.

Conversely, if their non-acceptance to workplace deviant behaviors was high; they are themselves less likely to indulge themselves in such behaviors.

Study Instruments

1. EPS scale developed by Forsyth (1980) [6] was used to measure dimensions of ethical profiles of respondents. Alpha Coefficient for the idealism scale was .829 and for relativism scale was found to be .816

2. Workplace deviant behavior scale developed by Bennet et al (1997) [4] was used to estimate the degree of 'non-acceptance of workplace deviant behavior of the respondents. Alpha Coefficient for the interpersonal scale was .95 and for relativism scale was found to be .92.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. Ethics

A psychologist put stress in individual differences to explain difference in moral judgments. Later research also supported his assumptions [6]. Despite many factor affecting the phenomena of individuals in exhibiting aberrations to approved social behavior; a considerable factor known to have a relation with such behavior is the individual's ethical ideology [7]. Ethical ideology, here, means that system of ethical thinking which may lead one to decide whether a particular action is ethically /morally correct or not [8].

In his research Forsyth found that though every individual interprets ethics in his/her own way by referring to his/her own system of ethics, the commonality was observable in the pattern through which his /her system of ethical thinking works [6]. The first dimension of understanding this; was that some people do not so readily accept the universal moral rules in making judgments on questions of moral behaviors, while other more readily do so. The second individual level dimension underlying moral decisions is the focus on 'idealism' in personal moral approach.

The first dimension of believing or not believing in universal moral principles was called relativism. Believing in Universal moral principles meant lower relativism and vice versa. The second dimension of focusing on idealism in personal moral approach was named idealism. Thereby, he proposed a 2 X 2 moral grid which resulted in the following grid as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Source: A taxonomy of Ethical Behaviors [6]

On basis of the above, Forsyth developed a 20 item scale to measure each of the dimensions. The scale had 10- items on idealism and another 10 items on relativism.

Later, Reidenbach and Robin (1988, 1990) [9, 10]

suggested 5 dimensions of Ethics and developed a scale based on the same [9-11].

The dimensions were:

1. Deontology: This was about one's obligation to observe ethical conduct.

2. Utilitarianism: It referred to the maxim of maximizing the benefits for maximum people.

3. Relativism: Based on the concept that all prevailing ethical principles don't exist.

4. Egoism: It refers to one's self promotion or self interest orientation.

5. Justice: This refers to the concept of equality among peers.

Though, Reidenbach and Robin' scale developed on basis of the above dimensions are useful in giving an idea about one's ethical orientation, Forsyth's scale seems more appropriate in describing the rationale behind one's ethical thinking.

B. Workplace deviant behavior

Workplace deviance has been defined as voluntary behaviour that violates significant organizational norms and, in so doing, threatens the well-being of the organization or its members, or both [2]. WDB therefore involves two important facets [3].

1. Lack of employee motivation to comply and/or

2. Motivation to violate organizational/social norms

Norms, here, refer to elementary morals or implicit or explicit organizational rules or policies. WDB is different from ethics in the sense that this happens in a very narrow scope depending upon the leverages and conditions. This means that WDB could be an aberration from reasonable norms, generally executed where it is easiest to execute. The concept is closely related to ethics as it involves a sense of what is right or wrong else it could also be a reaction to some organizational treatments. Some factors behind WDB could be supposed unfairness, role modeling or just the excitement [4].

However, it would not be unreasonable to propose and study a link between personal ethical positions and Workplace deviant behavior (WDB), where respondents don't respond on WDBs on upon specific personal situations within an organizational setting, which in our study have been siphoned off by taking their general responses as observers; with no prior situational background within any specific organizational settings.

Workplace deviant behavior is linked to ethics. A number of studies have found that unethical conduct of one person or especially the leader leads to multiplication in workplace deviant behavior. Workplace deviant behavior of an employee has a cascading effect. The social cognitive theory can explain the phenomena. Experience of inducements influences a person to be effected by it. Thus, behavior of a human being is shaped by the interactions he makes with others in terms of actions, thoughts and the environment or context intimated that an individual's behavioral activity can be affected by some aspect in the environment which would alter the individual's cognition, or aptitude, to complete a specific task. Resultantly an unethical action by one person may become the justification for another to do the same. Added if the action is not admonished it may be assumed to be acceptable or appropriate [12, 13].

Drawing upon the social cognitive theory Liu et al proposed that ethical leadership may reduce workplace deviant behavior. Because of learning from such leaders; employees' disengagement to morals diminishes and they are more complying in not exhibiting workplace deviant behavior. (Liu, Lam, & Loi, 2012).

Therefore, it is even more important in a country like India which is low on individualism and is still a collectivist society. Since individualism is low it seems unlikely that people would chart out their own ethics in a very strong manner. Instead the acceptability gets dependent upon practice and workplace deviant behavior could become contagious.

IV. DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

A. Data Collection

Data was collected from employees with at least three years of working experience in NCR region in India. There was no binding with respect to industry classification. A total of 141 responses were collected.

Hub and spoke model was used to administer the questionnaire to the respondents. While the researchers themselves collected data from 86 respondents in their own presence, 76 questionnaires were administered to respondents through students who approached their own contacts to fill up the questionnaires. The students were briefed about the questionnaires and were told to contact the researchers over the phone in case of any doubt during the process.

The questions were easily understood by respondents and there were no doubts raised by the respondents while responding to the items in the scales.

In all 152 questionnaires were circulated but only 148 responses were received. Of these 7 responses were rejected to being incomplete, illegible or inconsistent.

As shown in below nearly 60% of the respondents were males and nearly 40% were females. The mean age of respondents was 37 years with a standard deviation of 7.2 years. The descriptives are shown below in Table1 and Table 2.

Table 1 : Gender wise demographics

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	85	60.3	60.3	60.3
	Female	56	39.7	39.7	100
	Total	141	100	100	

Table 2: Age Statistics

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.772
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square		1.276E3
Df		190
Sig.		.000

	N	Minimum		Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	141	24.00	50.00	37.2482	7.29594
Valid N (listwise)	141				

Table 3: KMO and Bartlett's Test for EPS Items

B. Scale Parameters

The scale reliability alpha coefficient for the Forsyth's EPS scale (1980), in this study was found to be .82 which is quite healthy. For the Relativism dimension it was .81.

Similarly, the reliability figures for the workplace deviant scale developed by Bennet R (1997) [4]

were .95 and .93 for the interpersonal and organizational deviant behaviour respectively.

The KMO measure for sampling adequacy and Bartletts Test for sphericity for the EPS items and for the workplace deviant behaviour items is presented below in tables 3 and 4 respectively.

KMO in both is above 0.6 and significance is well below .05.

Table 4: KMO and Bartlett's Test for Workplace deviant behaviour Items

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.928
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square		2.812E3
Df		276
Sig.		.000

Factor Analysis, when, restricted to two factors was confirmatory to the initial scale and realized the same two components of the constructs as it was envisioned by the developers. The pattern matrix for both Forsyth's EPS and Bennet's Workplace Deviant behaviour scale are shown in Table 5 and 6 as under.

This confirms the credence of the scale in the Indian context where also the similar results were observed.

Table 5 : Pattern Matrix Forsyth's EPS scale

	Component	
	Idealism	Relativism
Idealism5	.803	
Idealism4	.793	
Idealism3	.781	
IdealismI6	.757	
Idealism2	.731	
Idealism1	.678	
Idealism8	.650	
Idealism9	.538	
Idealism10	.434	
Relativism7		.803
Relativism5		.736
Relativism8		.705
Relativism4		.693
Relativism1		.675
Relativism6		.668
Relativism3		.484
Relativism2		.482
Idealism7	.315	.473
Relativism9		.406
Relativism10		.339

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization

Table 6: Pattern Matrix Workplace Deviant Behaviour

	Components	
	Organizational	Personal
Organizational5	.888	
Organizational4	.825	
Organizational2	.824	
Organizational1	.794	
Organizational3	.769	
Organizational10	.739	
Organizational7	.739	
Organizational13	.680	
Organizational6	.679	
Organizational9	.634	
Organizational8	.542	
Organizational14	.522	
Organizational12	.481	
Organizational11	.422	
Interpersonal9		-.971
Interpersonal2		-.884
Interpersonal6		-.843
Interpersonal1		-.832
Interpersonal5		-.819
Interpersonal7		-.816
Interpersonal10		-.815
Interpersonal4		-.782
Interpersonal8		-.772
Interpersonal3		-.771

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.

Hypothesis 1: Idealist ethical profile has no effect on

workplace deviant behaviour.

Regression analysis: Regression of workplace deviant behaviour (both organizational and interpersonal taken together) was found positive and moderate w.r.t the 'idealism' dimension of the Forsyth's EPS scale. Adjusted R squared value was .257 (Table 7). Since p value is less than .05 we reject the hypothesis indicating that Idealist Ethical profile has an impact on WDB in a positive sense.

Table 7: Regression of Idealism on Workplace Deviant behavior

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.513[a]	.263	.257	1.05824

a. Predictors: (Constant), Idealism

ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	55.459	1	55.459	49.523	.000[a]
	Residual	155.663	139	1.120		
	Total	211.122	140			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Idealism
b. Dependent Variable: WorkplaceDeviance

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.296	.611		3.757	.000
	Idealism	.612	.087	.513	7.037	.000

a. Dependent Variable: WorkplaceDeviance

Hypothesis 2: Relativist ethical profile has no effect on workplace deviant behaviour.

Regression analysis: Regression of workplace deviant behaviour (both organizational and interpersonal taken together) was found negative and moderate w.r.t the 'relativism' dimension of the Forsyth's EPS scale. Regression coefficient =-.604 and adjusted R square value is .361. Again since significance value is less than .05, the null hypothesis is rejected indicating that Relativism has an impact on WDB as shown in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Regression of relativism on Workplace Deviant Behaviour

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.604[a]	.365	.361	.98202

a. Predictors: (Constant), Relativism

ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	77.074	1	77.074	79.922	.000[a]
	Residual	134.048	139	.964		
	Total	211.122	140			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Relativism
b. Dependent Variable: WorkplaceDeviance

Hypothesis 3: Relativism and idealism in ethical profile together have no effect on workplace deviant behaviour.

When Workplace Deviant Behaviour is taken as the dependent variable and regressed with both Idealism and relativism very strong regression is observed as shown in Table 9 below Adjusted R square value is .593 which shows strong regression. Together idealism and relativism increase this regression coefficient significantly. Relativism shows increased negative coefficient and idealism shows increased positive coefficient. Again the null hypothesis is rejected.

Regression of idealism and relativism on workplace deviant behavior.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.774[a]	.599	.593	.78298

a. Predictors: (Constant), Idealism, Relativism

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	7.454	.659		11.315	.000
	Relativism	-.676	.063	-.581	-10.766	.000
	Idealism	.579	.064	.485	8.981	.000

a. Dependent Variable: WorkplaceDeviance

ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	126.519	2	63.260	103.186	.000[a]
	Residual	84.603	138	.613		
	Total	211.122	140			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Idealism, Relativism
b. Dependent Variable: WorkplaceDeviance

V. DISCUSSIONS

Since the data collected is from India, a country which is largely a collectivist culture it may not be difficult to achieve agreements on universal ethical conduct. Added, the cognitive social learning theory also applies.It is therefore easy to observe that one deviant behavior, which goes without being objected, leads to it's spread across the organization and even outside the organization.

Absolutism on the other hand (high on idealism and simultaneously low on relativism) is also easy to incorporate in such a collectivist culture provided a capable leader shows the way. It is a matter of common observation that Indian employees easily adapt to varied cultures and readily adopt the ethical practices of many organizations even if they are very different on their ethical standards, code of ethics or definition of workplace deviant behavior.

Since absolutists exhibit lower levels of workplace deviant behavior, it may be recommended to managers/leaders, that they should try to develop consensus on universal moral principles, which once done; would reduce workplace deviant behavior and lead to higher performance for the organizations. However, care should be taken that too much independence or individualism in moral decisioning could counter the positive effects that ones' faith in idealism and mitigate the effects thereof.

Therefore, we recommend stress on universal moral principles

and selection of ethical profiles which rank higher on idealism and lower on relativism to have a smooth organization with minimum workplace deviant behavior.

VI. CONCLUSION

A model is hereby presented, which has the potential to predict the degree of workplace deviant behaviour on basis of ethical profiles of the employees. In simple words profile which is high on idealism and low on relativism is less likely to exhibit workplace deviant behaviour. It is clear from the above data that independently, both idealism and relativism can predict workplace deviant behaviour, but separately the strength of the predictability is at best modest. However; when taken together (regression coefficient R squared value of .593 is very high and significant) idealism and relativism are strong psychometric dimensions to predict workplace deviant behaviour.

The vice versa also holds good. Employees low on workplace deviant behaviour are more likely to have higher psychometric rating on idealism while having lower ratings on relativism.

It is therefore recommended that a strong culture based on universal moral approach should be developed while prudent care should be taken in selection of employees to minimize workplace deviant behaviour. This may be further correlate to job satisfaction, trust and prosocial behaviours which could in turn impact productivity, efficiencies and innovations for organizations as some previous studies have suggested.

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