Chapter 2
A Cross–Cultural Review of Workplace Deviance Research

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ABSTRACT

In the last two decades, workplace deviance becomes one of the most important topics to understand negative behaviors at work. However, many of the studies that examine deviance take a universal perspective and undermine cross-cultural differences. To address this gap, this chapter focuses on cross-cultural differences and its relationship with deviant workplace behaviors. The authors claim that cross-cultural differences can play an important role as an antecedent and/or moderator variable in influencing deviant behaviors. In order to discuss these effects, they first summarize recent developments in individualism-collectivism, tightness-looseness, and honor cultures. Based on their interpretations, target-oriented deviance might be highly contextualized in collectivist cultures, form of deviance and contents of deviance could be different from honor to dignity cultures. In addition, deviant behaviors as responses to specific events might differ whether a person belongs in a tight culture or not. The implications of our arguments and future research directions are discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

Workplace deviance is one of the most important constructs for understanding employees’ behaviors when they are culturally misfit to their organizations. It specifically refers to “voluntary behaviors that violate significant organizational norms and, in so doing, threatens the well-being of the organization and/or its members” (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). This definition, the most cited and agreed-upon of workplace deviance, enables more concentrated studies in deviance research. Through numerous studies, our understanding of the implicit and explicit, material and non-material costs of employees’ deviant behaviors has been expanded. These studies not only increase our knowledge about costs but also determine the scope (Marcus et. al. 2016), antecedents (Hershcovis et.al., 2007; Barling, Dupre & Kelloway, 2009) and consequences (Dalal, 2005) of deviant behaviors.

Deviant behaviors have long been a problem in the workplace, but they have received scholarly attention recently, especially in the last two decades. The subject has drawn attention owing to the realization that employees’ negative behaviors toward others are frequent and severely damage organizational and individual-level outcomes (Simons & Roberson, 2003); in this way, workplace deviance diminishes important resources that may help an organization gain a competitive advantage. In terms of frequency, it is found out that employee deviation is a factor in 30% of all job failures. Seventy-five percent of employees commit theft at least once (Greenberg, 1990). Fraud, vandalism or sabotage is committed by 75% of all employees in the workplace. Forty-two percent of women suffer from sexual harassment in the workplace (Robinson & Greenberg, 1998).

Workplace deviance is not only a pervasive issue, it also costs so much for all involved. For example, recent studies have concluded that the global cost of company fraud (a form of workplace deviance) tops three billion dollars (Sweet, 2018), and workplace bullying and harassment (forms of workplace deviance) cost two billion pounds (Torjesen, 2018). (Please see Baharom, Bin Sharfuddin, & Iqbal (2018) for a detailed list of costs). These costs are so serious that some studies have even tried to come up with an equation to understand when a deviant person is detrimental to his/her organization (Levy & Tziner, 2011). Unfortunately, workplace deviance does not only have economic costs, but also social costs (Kidwell & Martin, 2005). Declining credibility and diminished employee morale (Galperin & Burke, 2006), increased employee stress (O’Leary-Kelly, Griffin, & Glew, 1996), decreased self-esteem, and feelings of physical and psychological pain (Griffin, O’Leary-Kelly, & Collins, 1998) are examples of such social costs.

A comprehensive and general typology to understand these behaviors can be based on targets of the deviant behavior (people or the organization) (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). If deviant behavior is directed toward an organization, it is called
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