Impact of Personality traits on Workplace Deviance – A Pakistani Perspective

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Abstract   *This research-based study investigated empirically the impact of agreeableness personality traits to workplace deviant behavior in employees working in different organizations. We collected data through cross-sectional method from 290 employees who can read and understand English. Previous studies conducted related to these constructs confirmed that questionnaires in English language are appropriate for data collection. Correlation and regression analysis were used to analyze the data because it fulfills the purpose related to this research. The study found that agreeable personality trait is negatively related to workplace deviance or employees with agreeableness personality trait remain focused on their job in organization. Or employees who are low in agreeableness trait are likely to exhibit deviant work behavior at work-setting. The study suggested that organizations should consider personality traits while hiring new employees. This practice will reduce workplace deviant behavior in the work setting of organizations.*

Key Words: Workplace Deviance, Personality Traits, Agreeableness

Introduction

Workplace deviance is the deliberate effort or desires to damage to company more precisely doing harmful activities in work setting. This concept and notion are instrumental in communication in organizational settings due to its huge impact on productivity and performance of organizations. History of this notion is not too old, from 1970s to 1980 focus of research was only on single factor and behavior which is behavior of withdrawal or behavior related to theft. However during last two decades focus of this behavior became broader and research studies identified other behaviors that are willful actions to damage workplace setting and organization. As per study conducted by Robinson & Bennett (1995) has overwhelmed organizations for centuries but mostly it is evolved after industrial revolution which made organizations think and address issues more systematically. One study conducted by Bennett & Robinson (2000) found few more alarming things that majority of employees are involved in workplace deviance behavior ranging from 40 percent to 70 percent. This figure showed how it is important to counter this type of emergency. A study conducted in Australia found that 31% employees are verbally abused by their supervisor during work time which is great concern for top management and 35% of employees are harassed and abused by coworkers and colleagues around them. This mean big reasons for workplace deviance may be supervisor and coworkers which can be trained and catered. There may be many reasons due to those employees involve in this type of behaviors e.g. ill-treatment by supervisor, break of psychological contract or emotional distress. Stress-related to work environment is among the major cause of workplace deviance, again it's up to one's own personality traits how he/she react when facing stressful situation at workplace. That's way there is a negative relationship is expected and reported between agreeableness personality trait and workplace deviance while positive relationship was reported between low emotional stability and workplace deviance. So it's important to investigate the role of personality traits to predict this behavior which is not beneficial for employees as well for organizations. As per theory of planned behavior that differences

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among individual behavior can predict/forecast the individual reaction in particular situation especially counter work behavior. Companies should avoid those things which make employees deviant and there are multiple ways that can be used to reduce deviance behavior and prevent employees from this type of behavior. Studies conducted in United States found that companies suffered losses each year more than 200 billion dollars which are again great financial loss. After realizing the importance of this behavior organizations is spending handsome amount of money to cater this loss. If we measure the loss, organizations need to be serious to cater these types of behavioral problems because their huge contribution to profitability and loss. In its era of competition, organizations are taking care of minor things to reduce the cost and increase profitability. Because these are the two main factors that are necessary for survival of organizations in current scenario. Organizations are investing huge amounts in training and development, so their employees can be more productive as compared to competitor's organizations. Those organization which has talented and dedicated staff are more ahead of other organizations which don't have talented and dedicated staff. So it's necessary for all organizations to take care of their best resource which is human resources or employees working in their organizations. Indeed its employees play important role in bringing organizations towards progress and prosperity among their competitors in local markets as well as in international markets. Now a day's many researchers and practitioners are focusing on different techniques to identify the talents and qualities in human resource those can be converted into competitive advantage. During recruitment of staff, management should consider emotional intelligence with intelligence quotient, because emotional intelligence is more important in critical positions. If we talk about personality, it remained the major and specific area in social psychology for scholars. Personality plays vital role in progress of individuals which ultimately are beneficial for organizations, so one cannot ignore the personality traits of individuals' employees. More and more training and workshops are being arranged to identify these traits and furthermore how to utilize these traits in specific organizations. It does not only give idea about good side of traits but also beneficial to identify the bad side of traits. In this way, management not only takes advantage of specific traits but also able to safeguard themselves from harmful effects of these traits which are important for a competitive edge over competitors. Early research studies like Epstein & O'Brien (1985) have conflicting and different views about Influence of one's personality on specific behavior of employee or individual. Personality theorists have confidence in universality of individual characters in forecasting behaviors, however situational view relies on that particular situation/condition is stronger and better interpreter of individual behavior and its impact (Epstein & O'Brien, 1985). So it's also important to judge one's behavior during particular situation, for example some individuals are very productive and creative in pressure situations while other individuals are less productive and less creative in same situation. Organizations should take care of particular situations and traits while giving important and crucial tasks to their employees to get maximum productivity or avoiding any loss due to situational factors.

If one sees critique on this personality trait model by Michel (1968) which discouraged and decrease the motivation to do further research in personality area for more than 20 years. After many years, Costa and McCrae (1985) presented the Big Five Model of personality. Due to this model researchers again started to explore this important area of social psychology. We can say it was the breakthrough in this area which become the starting point of new era. As per Costa and McCrae (1985) there are five personality traits i.e. Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Extraversion, Openness to experience and Neuroticism. Digman (1990) defines these traits as Conscientiousness is related to punctuality, commitment and task orientation i.e. these people always reach their work stations on time and complete their tasks as per given time table. Most organizations search these types of personality traits because most of the times they are beneficial for organizations. Extraversion is related to aggression, interactiveness, opportunist and reward oriented i.e. these types of employees are ready to go beyond their potential if there is proper reward system in the organization. Agreeableness is about relation oriented, cooperative, and credulous i.e. they are good team players and can adjust themselves in any situation and types of people. Organizations can hire them in those tasks which require more cohesiveness in team to avoid conflict within team. Openness to experience is related to creativity, sensitivity and scholarly i.e. these people need independence and less bossy environment in organizations and need environment which encourages innovation and creativity, and last but not least Neuroticism is all about negativity, nervousness, and lacking confidence which is mostly not cited by organizations because they are not productive themselves but also create hurdle in

work of other people.

As per study conducted by Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, & Barrick (999), during last thirty years, the research related to Big Five personality traits remained focus around career accomplishment and career success , and further on job satisfaction and related constructs (Judge et al, 2002), work or job performance of employees in organization settings (Barrick & Mount, 1991), Leadership and Management (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002), motivation for performance (Judge & Ilies, 2002) and numerous other job outcomes. We can say that workplace deviance is the behavior and performance of the employees in work settings toward the organization which overall affects the norms and traditions of the organization and its affiliates (Robinson and Bennett, 1995). It is compacted in the nature of human being which produces workplace deviance and damages the other stakeholders of the organization (Robinson and Bennett, 1995). Workplace deviance behavior is not only dangerous for organization but also harmful to employee himself. Previously, much work was not performed to minimize the impact of this type of behavior because of lack of knowledge, now management is more conscious about workplace Deviance and its harmful effect on both individual and organization which is good sign.

Personality traits have a level of influence on deviating behaviors of employees working in an organization with serious implications for the organizations. In Pakistan where we have different personalities people working at the same place the issue can be of critical importance as it is important for organizations to understand how their employees will act to a certain instruction or the environment as a whole. This will lead to better working efficiency of organization, though making this a difficult task for managers. Managers will now have to deal with diverse nature and personality people and will have to handle them accordingly. If not done appropriately it might have negative consequences for the employee-organization setting.

Individuals/people who face pressure due to any reason on the job may suffer from stress and demonstrate tense behavior and have less tolerant behavior with other coworkers. This ultimately leads to different kinds of workplace deviance and activities which are not beneficial for organizations (Vigoda, 2002). Many studies also focused on financial impact of counter work behaviors as well which is most important concern for companies and their shareholders because, in the end, shareholders demand profitability against their investment. Due to this top management is taking it very seriously because ultimate loss of company also targets their capability and suitability. Organizations are taking workplace deviance seriously due to counterproductive behavior which is reported in many research studies during last decade (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Now organizations are working hard to counter this behavior through training and different techniques. One cannot ignore the importance of specific culture of organization and country while studying counter workplace deviance. In different cultures, different types of deviance can be observed and their impacts on employees and companies are also different. In Asian culture, employees possess different personality traits and react differently in workplace deviance while in Europe people possess different traits and their definition and reaction may differ while countering such situations. So organizations should not ignore this important construct while dealing counter work behavior. We cannot ignore the role of immediate supervisor creating or dealing this type of behavior because sometimes bad attitude of supervisor may lead to employees to involve counter work behavior, so both employees and their immediate supervisors need attention. There are many forms of deviance but workplace deviance has two dimensions one is interpersonal deviance and another one is organizational deviance. Interpersonal deviance is the conversations about colleagues or hurting someone in workplace and thinking to give harm to other employees. This mean employee who is suffering from such behavior not only able to focus his own work but also de tracking the other employees to perform their work. Furthermore, his negative attitude towards organization is more dangerous and will always think about giving harm to organization. This means there is double loss, one he is not performing his own work for whom he is paid but also not letting other employees perform their tasks. So it is utmost necessary for management to identify these types of employees and behaviors in work settings. Organizational deviance is about damaging the property of organizations like damaging or stealing the goods and do not put effective efforts or their energies (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). The most common purpose of interpersonal deviance is to make target the coworkers and employees working in the organization. It may be doing insult, putting harsh words and rude or impolite attitude (Giacalone, Riordan & Rosenfeld, 1997) which ultimately inculcates negativity in other employees working in organizations that are more dangerous because it will directly hit the productivity of people. So during hiring management should asses

the personality of prospect candidate, this will help organization to overcome the problem of workplace deviance. One employee who exhibits workplace deviant behavior whether it is organizational deviance or interpersonal deviance, in both cases organization will be sufferer because in case of interpersonal deviance one will be harmful to other employees, which will result in lower productivity on part of other employees. This means it's beneficial for organizations to avoid individuals who may be engaged in this practice. As per previous research, it's up to employees who are working in same organization what is their behaviors or treatment towards their fellows or colleagues (Robinson and Bennett, 1995). Organizational deviance happens when relationship is not good or under fire, which may lead to bad activities like theft or stealing in the organization or damaging property related to firm (Giacalone et al., 1997). So we can say that in this type of deviance, the employee wants to harm the organization (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). In this situation competitors can take advantage while taking important information from de tracked employees and employees can share this strategic information with others who can harm organizations. Because it is willful try to damage organization and its assets, can give more damage as compared to other market factors like competitors' rivalry, price competition and low/high cost of production. The only way to cater this behavior is to timely identify and eradicate it from company to safeguard interests. Another way is to make proper mechanisms so it cannot occur in future hence another way is do not create so stressful situation for employees that compel them to involve in counter work behavior. It can be done through training and other psychological activities.

There is huge difference in Interpersonal deviance and organizational deviance, it cannot be seen as a whole because of the diverse thoughts and beliefs of minds (Giacalone et al., 1997) but both behaviors are harmful to productivity and performance of individuals as well organizations. So these both behaviors should be addressed as soon as possible when identified by managers. However, in both types of deviances, it is the responsibility of management to take care of it. As it is era of competitiveness in term of cost and profit, organizations should not ignore the potential losses which can be incurred due to their negligence during recruitment or dealing with difficult employees. Most of the organizations established a psychology department or hired a specialist psychologist to deal such types of problems. Responsibilities of this department include assessing the personality of employees while assigning the complicated and important tasks. Organizations suffered a lot in terms of money due to such type of behavior of their employees. Many talented employees left their organizations due to these situations because de tracked employees made their living and work environment miserable due to performance and commitment of talented individuals with their companies and workers. Organizations are losing millions of dollars due to theft of employees who are involved in workplace deviance. Furthermore, goodwill loss is more and more as compared to loss made by theft. One should not ignore the demographic factors, there are different views about relationship between demographics background and workplace deviance. Few studies suggested that there is a significant relationship between these two constructs while few studies conducted in western culture did not find any relationship between these two constructs. So we can say findings in demographics and workplace deviance relationships are not consistent. There is significant relationship found between age and workplace deviance and same relationship is reported between gender and workplace deviant behavior, however no significant relationship has been predicted between tenure or length of service and workplace deviant behavior. Marital status and Sex have also found to be significant impact on such behavior. This means these factors should not be ignored while exploring these constructs.

Agreeableness and Job Outcomes

There is a type of personality that generally joined together with trustworthiness, being straight-forward, kindness, and compassionate in nature as was described by Costa & Widiger, (1994). Due to these characteristics, organizations prefer to hire such types of people, different studies elaborated these traits differently but all are agreed on that these types of people are not harmful to companies nor other employees working in organizations. These types of people are ready to work in any workplace setting and remained more productive than any other personality traits employees. Agreeableness people are more likely be promoted rapidly due to their cooperative and helpful nature. Other employees like to work with such type of persons, so there are very fewer chances that these types of people may involve in both types of workplace deviance unless there are situations those are beyond their control. On other side many research studies suggested that the people who are low in agreeableness scale

are uncooperative at leading to work setting this also tried to harm the norms and set principles of the organization as stated by Goldberg, (1992). During hiring process or handing over the tasks, managers should identify the traits of prospect employees and candidates, so in early stage one can avoid harmful effects. Many organizations are practicing these things during hiring and handing over the crucial tasks to avoid losses. Recent research studies Costa and McCrae (1992) suggested negative relation between agreeableness and counterproductive behavior (Wiggins, 1991; Graziano & Eisenberg, 1996; Wiggins & Trapnell, 1997), and agreeable persons are more concerned with other employees' welfare (Ashton & Lee, 2001). Agreeableness is more concerned about others, so they help other employees after completing their own tasks which are quite highly appreciated by management and ultimately beneficial for organizations and individuals as well.

Experimental studies proposed that individuals who possess agreeableness trait are people with high agreeableness are responsive and friendly with good nature also being helpful and supportive as stated by Barrack & Mount, (1991), these qualities are quite evident that these people will never involve in counter work behavior. In one other study by Witt, Burke, Barrack & Mount, (2002) also supported this notion that these people are more supportive and possess good nature which is beneficial to create conducive environment in the workplace. In organizations, agreeable individuals or employees show a forward-looking level of interpersonal ability and aptitude (Witt et al., 2002) which is very important for individual own career and success of organizations. OCB is positively related to job performance and job satisfaction of employees, we can say that individual performance leads to organizational performance which is necessary for survival of companies in current era. It's likely that agreeable persons elaborate organizational citizenship behavior in work setting, which is ultimately beneficial for organization. Both constructs OCB and agreeableness are sought by organizations.

Agreeableness is a component of the interpersonal act (Trapnell & Wiggins, 1990) and directly related to behavior of individuals in work setting. Generally, agreeable individuals are generous, philanthropic, helpful and trusting, research described that agreeableness has negative relation with feelings of aggression and hostility (Costa & McCrae, 1992). This enhances the notion that they will not involve in workplace deviance in normal circumstances and most of the time neither allows coworkers to involve in such types of activities that are harmful to other employees and organizations. Agreeable individuals give importance to help others and they keep themselves away from any sort of conflict, there is no attraction for conflict based control procedures. Usually agreeable individuals try to choose interpersonal diplomacy that was directed to conflict resolution rather than escalation of conflict (Graziano, Jensen-Campbell, & Hair, 1996), this type of trait is also important while leading the team. Highly aggregable people will not engage in interpersonal conflict and workplace deviance rather they will exhibit Organizational Citizenship Behavior because of similar features of this trait with Organizational Citizenship Behavior. As OCB is not part of formal job description, whoever exhibits it will do wholeheartedly without any external pressure. And in spite of knowing that it will not considered while doing formal performance appraisal, employees still possess should be rewarded by both ways either formally or informally Organizational citizenship behavior are one of the most desired behaviors in workplace setting and considered to be negatively related to all negative job outcomes including workplace deviance. On the basis of literature we developed following hypothesis.
Agreeableness will be negatively related to workplace deviance.

Methodology and Result

The nature of the study was cross-sectional and survey method was used to collect via questionnaire as it seems suitable technique for such types of constructs. Population is the target audience of any study, we collected data from employees working in different organization in Pakistan who can at least read and understand English. All variables of this study were measured by self-administered questionnaires. For measuring agreeableness we used John & Srivastava, (1999) 10 items scale. Descriptive stats has been run to find out Mean along with Standard Dev and Min/Max values so check the normality of the data. The table shows the Regression analysis for independent variable agreeableness and workplace deviance. The regression results of agreeableness personality type reflected negative relationship with workplace deviance. Many previous studies also suggested the positive relationship between these constructs, so our results are aligned with the previous studies conducted in western settings. However, there are few studies that suggested no relationship between these constructs.

Conclusion

The last three decades research provided ample evidence that personality is one of the important components in workplace settings. During recruitment or giving critical tasks to employees if organizations focus on personality types, it can enhance the productivity of their employees which ultimately beneficial organization. The right person for right job can be determined through these personality analyses. Our study results insisted that organization should give importance to link between personality traits and workplace deviance. Because they are directly related to progress and competitiveness of organizations. If organization does not focus on link of personality traits and workplace deviance, they can suffer a great loss. This study provided certain important constructs to management, how one can avoid and counter workplace deviance. Certain personality traits have a positive relationship with workplace deviance while some have positive relationship with it. So it's important to take care of individual employees while giving critical and important tasks. Employees with right personality types will contribute more and will not involve in counterproductive activities. In future research studies one can work on the moderating role of other constructs such as ethical work environment, trustworthiness, etc. Organizations can take practical steps to eliminate workplace deviant behavior by hiring consultants who can assess the personality types of employees and also take care of their psychological health. Psychological health is more important because they exhibit negative emotions in employees which can result in workplace deviant behavior. As this study is conducted in Pakistani workplace settings, so managers working in these organizations can take advantage of these findings. Because many organizations in Pakistan don't take care of such constructs, although these constructs are very important in success of organization. The majority of Pakistani organizations do not take personality tests while hiring or promoting employees which are again harmful to the productivity of organizations. There should be mechanism to test the personality type of individuals while giving crucial tasks. Future researchers can study many other constructs that are related to workplace deviance because employees are the best source in this era of competition. Complex and difficult tasks require teamwork, and workplace deviance not only effects the synergy of team but also reduces the productivity of individuals in team. So finally, it is recommended that personality type should be judges before making team of employees for complex and important nature tasks. Organizations may not ignore the financial loss related to this notion which is quite high in percentage which cannot be ignored because it ultimately affects the profitability of organizations.

Limitation of Study and Future Research Direction;

There are a few limitations to this study. We use Agreeableness from big five personality traits, future study can include another construct of big five. Furthermore, for measurement of personality one can use Type A and Type B personality constructs. Our research depends on the opinion of employees, maybe due to social and cultural context responses may be varied. Future research may collect data from supervisors and coworkers to avoid biases. Ethical behavior can be added while collection of data on workplace deviant, maybe this way result may differ. Questionnaires are in English language not in native language of respondents, maybe a few issues related to understandability, in future it can be translated in local language of respondents.

Correlation Results

S.No	Study Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Company										
2	Gender	0.08									
3	Age	-0.05	-0.12*								
4	Designation	0.08	0.13**	0.31**							
5	Tenure /number of years	-0.03	-0.07	0.50**	0.13**						
6	Total. Experience	-0.05	-0.13**	0.87**	0.21**	0.65**					
7	Education	-0.09	-0.24**	0.45**	0.04	0.04	0.37**				
8	Nature of job	0.04	0.01	0.09	0.25**	-0.04	0.08	0.14**			
9	Income level	-0.07	-0.09	0.65**	0.14	0.25**	0.50**	0.44**	0.01		
10	Agreeableness	0.02	-0.06	0.24**	0.39**	0.22*	0.28**	-0.16	-0.06	-0.09	

11	Work place Deviance	-0.04	-0.19**	0.14**	-0.06	0.18**	0.18**	0.26**	-0.08	-0.01	-0.33*

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2- tailed).

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

Regression – Agreeableness and Workforce Deviance

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Predictors	Deviance		
	β	**R**	**ΔR²**
Step 1 Control Variables	0.023		
Step 2 Agreeableness			
	-0.46**	0.52	-0.18

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2- tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

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