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WORKPLACE DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR: DOES PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT VIOLATION MATTER? AN EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

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ABSTRACT

Workplace deviant behaviour refers to “the voluntary behaviour that violates significant organizational norms”. In this study, 355 manufacturing industry employees participated in an investigation into the impact of Psychological Contract Violation (PCV) on Workplace Deviant Behaviour (WDB). Three forms of deviant behaviour were identified: interpersonal deviance, production deviance, and property deviance. Further to this three PCV dimensions were also identified, namely, growth and development, autonomy and organizational support. The regression analyses performed yielded mixed results. PCV with respect to ‘autonomy and control’ demonstrated a negative relationship with interpersonal deviance and property deviance, but a positive relationship with production deviance. PCV with regard to ‘growth and development’ was found to exhibit a negative relationship with interpersonal deviance, but a positive relationship with property deviance. ‘Organizational support’ PCV exhibited no significant relationship with WDB.

Keywords: *Psychological contract violation, workplace deviant behaviour, interpersonal deviant behaviour, production deviant behaviour, property deviant behaviour.*

INTRODUCTION

A critical aspect of any organization is the interaction between individuals; such interactions create an opportunity for the expression of various forms of individual behaviour that can affect other individuals, organizations and the society. Although some behaviour is socially desirable – such as helping and citizenship-like behaviour, others may be viewed as outside the norms of an organization. Common abnormal acceptable behaviour includes stealing, withholding effort, absenteeism and abusing sick day privileges, all of which have been categorized by researchers (Applebaum, Deguire and Lay, 2005; Bennett and Robinson, 2000; Diefendorff and Mehta, 2007; Hollinger, 1986 and Kantur, 2010) as workplace deviant behaviour. Workplace deviant behaviour (WDB) is a very pervasive and costly problem confronted by today's organizations (Aquino *et al.*, 2004). It has been shown that the majority of employees engage in some form of employee deviance, such as stealing company property, absenteeism, sabotage, withholding effort, abusing drugs and alcohol, filing fake accident claims, abusing sick day privileges, taking long breaks (Bolin and Heatherly, 2001 and Giacalone *et al.*, 1997), and hiding needed resources (Baron and Neuman, 1998). The amount of losses arising from these wrongdoings can be substantial and according to Murphy (1993) in the USA, employee deviance and delinquency results in organizational losses ranging from US\$6-200 billion annually. As a consequence researchers have increasingly focused on the study of WDB to identify and understand the predictors, consequences and devise strategies to minimize WDB in the workplace.

In Malaysia, WDB issues have been discussed extensively and is frequently the subject of reports in newspapers and other public media concerning cases involving dishonesty, poor work attitude (New Straits Time, 2005), fraudulence (New Straits Times, 2010) and the falsification of medical certificates (Utusan Malaysia, 2003). Sick leave is scourge of the workplace and the Malaysian Employers Federation has stated that Malaysian employees take too much medical leave (without hospitalization); the average person took 4.2 days of sick leave in 2007 and cost employers RM2.7 billion for employees' outpatient treatment. In contrast, employees in developed countries, such as the United Kingdom only took an average of 0.9 days of medical leave per person (Anonymous, 2008). A review of the industrial law reports from 2000-2009 indicate the

presence of a variety of deviant behaviour amongst Malaysian employees (The Malaysian Current Law Journal 2000-2009). Sabotage, fights at work, threats, assaults, harassment and use of abusive language are among the cases of WDB reported to the Malaysian Labour Department. Unfortunately, the Malaysian Labour Department has not produced any formal statistics on the phenomenon of WDB (Shamsudin and Rahman, 2006). In addition, there is a distinct possibility that many negative incidences are not reported to avoid tarnishing the reputations of the organizations concerned according to Atkinson (2000). The manufacturing sector, the largest employer from 2001-2010 (Ninth Malaysia plan 2006-2010, 2006), should be greatly concerned with respect to WDB issues, since it is significantly detrimental to the manufacturing sector if the consequences of employee deviant behaviour at work is neglected. Hence, there is a need for investigation in order to identify WDB predictors within the Malaysian manufacturing sector.

Given the negative outcomes associated with occurrences of WDB, an investigation on its determinants becomes imperative. Possible predictors of WDB include individual personality, work-related, environmental and organizational factors (Greenberg and Barling, 1996; Griffin and O'Leary-Kelly, 2004; Lau *et al.*, 2003; Peterson, 2002 and Raelin, 1984). Individual personality factors consider the possibility that an employee's personal characteristics are responsible for WDB occurrences (Bolin and Heatherly, 2001; Harris and Ogbonna, 2002 and Sims, 2002). Work-related factors concern the actual conditions governing an individual's work, such as job characteristics and work stressors (Chen and Spector, 1991; Fox *et al.*, 2001 and Tepper *et al.*, 2009). Environmental factors may include the organizational climate, ethical climate, organizational constraints and environmental conditions (Vardi, 2001 and Weber *et al.*, 2003). Organizational factors describe the structural framework surrounding one's work environment, such as the technology, organizational structure, hierarchy of authority, and bureaucratic policies and procedures (Henle, 2005; Peterson, 2002; Robinson and Greenberg, 1998 and Vigoda, 2002). However little research has been performed with respect to the relationship between organizational factors and WDB (Peterson, 2002 and Robinson and Greenberg, 1998). Thus, there is a need for research, which examines the potential organizational factors that may influence deviant behaviour, which is in line with that noted by Griffin and O'Leary-Kelly (2004) who declared that more studies are required in order to seek clarification of organizational factors as WDB determinants.

One of the important features in an organization that influences employment relationships is the Psychological Contract (PC), whereby employees' perceptions of the state of the PC (met, exceeded, or violated) can influence behaviour. Despite reasons to believe that WDB is affected by the PC, only a handful of empirical efforts have been performed on the consequences of PC (Robinson and Brown, 2004; Rousseau, 1995 and Spector and Fox, 2002). Furthermore, previous studies have focused on the relationships between psychological contract violation (PCV) and specific forms of deviant behaviour, such as intention to leave, organizational cynicism, passive negligence, active destruction, absenteeism, and withdrawal of citizenship-like behaviour (Chrobot-Mason, 2003; Kickul *et al.*, 2001; Pate *et al.*, 2003; Robinson *et al.*, 1994; Sutton and Griffin, 2004 and Tekleab and Taylor, 2003). Only one study to date (Kickul, 2001) has investigated the effects of PCV on WDB.

It is also of note that most studies relating to identifying and understanding the predictors of WDB have used samples from industrialized and developed countries (Bennett and Robinson, 2000; Colbert *et al.*, 2004; Henle, 2005; Liao *et al.*, 2004; Marcus and Schuler, 2004 and Raelin, 1984). Very few published studies pertaining to this subject and its occurrence in Malaysia have been traced. Shamsudin (2003) explored the degree of workplace deviance within the hotel industry and how behaviour varies according to employees' work-related attitudes, Radzi and Din (2005) investigated the relationship between leadership and WDB, and Nasurdin and Razali (2006) examined the relationship between organizational politics and deviant behaviour, and whether gender plays a role in moderating the relationship. In order to facilitate productivity improvements, cost reductions, restructuring, and gaining competitive advantages local organizations must address the issue of PCV and this study investigates the relationships between PCV and more generic forms of deviant behaviour, namely (WDB), in the context of Malaysia.

WORKPLACE DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR

Deviant behaviour in the workplace (WDB) refers to "voluntary behaviour that violates significant organizational norms and in doing so threatens the well-being of an organization, its members or both" (Robinson and Bennett, 1995). Examples of such behaviour includes absenteeism (Johns,

1997), theft (Greenberg, 1997) and sexual harassment (Paetzold, 2004). Researchers have used different terms to categorize deviant behaviour including organizational misbehaviour (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999), organizational retaliation behaviour (Skarlicki and Folger, 1997), antisocial behaviour (Giacalone and Greenberg, 1997), counterproductive behaviour (Marcus and Schuler, 2004) and workplace aggression (Baron and Neuman, 1998). According to Robinson and Bennett (1995), WDB can vary based on its target, i.e. whether it is organizational or individual. Organizational targets can be categorized into property deviance and production deviance, where property deviance refers to incidents where an employee violates organizational norms by acquiring or damaging an organization's tangible assets and production deviance refers to employee behaviour that violates organizational norms with regard to the quality and quantity of work being accomplished. Individual targets may be categorized as political deviance and personal aggression, where political deviance refers to behaviour that causes other individuals a political disadvantage and personal aggression refers to acts of hostility toward other individuals. In summary, based upon past research this study conceptualizes WDB with respect to its target; organizational deviance (WDBO) and interpersonal deviance (WDBI).

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT VIOLATION AND WORKPLACE DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR

Psychological Contract (PC) is a form of belief relating to an exchange relationship between two parties (Kickul and Lester, 2001; Rousseau, 1995; Shore and Tetrick, 1994 and Si *et al.*, 2008). According to Rousseau (1995), PC reflects "individual beliefs, shaped by the organization, regarding terms of exchange agreement between individuals and their organizations". The terms of PC may include an organization's human resource management (HRM) practices, such as growth and development, training, rewards, job security and autonomy (Kickul, 2001 and Robinson *et al.*, 1994). PCV occurs when employees believe that their organization has failed to fulfil its promises (e.g. HRM practices) by failing to comply with the terms of the PC (Robinson and Rousseau, 1994).

When employers are perceived to have failed to fulfil their obligations and promises, employees may respond in the form of passive negligence or active destruction, such as vandalism, theft, interpersonal aggression,

work slowdowns, poor customer service provision, increased absenteeism, lateness, harassment, sabotage and negativism (Parks and Kidder, 1994; Rousseau, 1995 and Turnley and Feldman, 2000). Investigations have shown that PCVs do perceptually occur and negatively influence work attitudes and behaviour (Robinson *et al.*, 1994; Rousseau, 1990; Rousseau and Parks, 1993 and Turnley and Feldman, 1999 and 2000). Hence, it can be surmised that PCVs can lead to feelings of anger, injustice and betrayal, negativism, reduced satisfaction, feelings of distrust, higher intention to turnover, lack of support and respect, theft, absenteeism, lack of commitment, alcohol abuse, privilege abuse and lying. Such attitudes and behavioural outcomes are forms of WDB that have the potential to bring significant harm to an organization and its members (Robinson and Greenberg, 1998). This study considers the following hypotheses in relation to WDB:

Hypothesis 1: Psychological contract violation (growth and development, organizational rewards, autonomy and control) is positively related to organizational WDB.

Hypothesis 2: Psychological contract violation (growth and development, organizational rewards, autonomy and control) is positively related to interpersonal WDB.

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

The manufacturing sector was the largest employer in Malaysia from 2001-2010 according to the Ninth Malaysia plan 2006-2010 (2006) and should be highly concerned with respect to WDB issues, since neglecting the effects of deviant behaviour at work is highly detrimental. Hence, there is a significant need to investigate and identify the predictors of WDB within a Malaysian manufacturing context; consequently the respondents chosen for this study are production employees.

A total of 1000 questionnaires were distributed to production employees at 100 large companies (i.e. those who employ more than 500 people) and are members of the Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM). A systematic sampling procedure was implemented to select 100 companies from the FMM masterlist comprising of 262 large companies. Respondents were given two weeks in which to complete the questionnaires and with the assistance of firm human resource managers 355 useable questionnaires, representing a response rate of 35.5%, were returned and used in the analysis.

Measurement

The predictor variable used in this study is psychological contract violation (PCV), whereby perceptions of PCV were assessed using 15 items based on Kickul and Lester's (2001) conceptualization of PCV. Respondents were asked to rate their employers in relation to whether they have fulfilled the promises conceptualized under the following three dimensions; growth and development, organizational rewards, and autonomy and control. Responses to the items were made on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "1 = not at all fulfilled" to "7 = very fulfilled" and all rated items were then reverse coded in order to represent PCV by the employer.

The criterion variables related to deviant behaviour were gauged via supervisory ratings using the 27 items developed by Robinson and Bennett (1995) and scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "1 = never" to "7 = more than 15 times".

Method of Analysis

The hypotheses of the study were tested using hierarchical regression (Hair *et al.*, 2006). Previous studies have shown that gender, age, tenure and job position are all significant predictors of WDB (Douglas and Martinko, 2001; Lau *et al.*, 2002; Martinko *et al.*, 2002 and Thoms *et al.*, 2001) and hence all four demographic variables were controlled in the statistical analyses.

RESULTS

Sample Profile

A total of 355 respondents (subordinates) participated in the survey of which 59.4% were males, 40.6% were females, and 56% of them were married. The average respondent age was 30.19 years (SD= 6.9) and ranged from 19-57 years. Approximately 64.5% had educational qualifications up to secondary school level and the remaining respondents (35.5%) had certificates, diplomas or degree qualifications. In terms of ethnicity, the majority of the subordinates were Malays (84.5%) and the remaining percentage comprised of Chinese (6.5%), Indian (6.2%) and others (2.8%). The respondents average organizational tenure was 7.93 years (SD = 6.2).

The average age of the superiors responsible for evaluating the respondents, was 35.2 years (SD = 6.3) and 84.2% of them were married. The majority of the superiors were males (79.7%) and with respect to educational qualifications 32.9% possessed secondary school level qualification, 24.8% held diplomas, 35.5% had bachelor degrees and 6.7% had other qualifications. The majority of superiors were Malays (74.1%) and the remaining percentage comprised of Indians (14.6%) and Chinese (11.3%). The superior average organizational tenure was 9.7 years (SD = 7.1).

FACTOR ANALYSIS OF WORKPLACE DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR (WDB)

In order to identify appropriate factors for subsequent analyses data reduction was employed. Data reduction was performed in accordance with the guidelines proposed by Hair *et al.* (2006). A factor with less than three items was excluded from further analysis, because it is considered weak and unreliable (Castello and Osborne, 2005). Reliability tests were subsequently performed post factor analysis and exploratory principal component factor analysis was employed in order to assess the validity of the WDB construct. Table 1 presents the results of the factor analysis of the WDB variables.

According to Table 1, the KMO value, which is a measure of sampling adequacy of the items, is 0.86 indicating that the items are interrelated and share common factors. Bartlett's test of sphericity was also found to be significant (approx. Chi-square = 2719.64, $p < 0.001$) indicating the significance of the correlation matrix and thus the appropriateness for factor analysis. The individual MSA values for all items exceed 0.50, ranging from 0.74 to 0.94, which implies that the items represent the underlying structure of the new factors. Results of the varimax rotated analysis indicate the existence of three significant factors with eigenvalues greater than one, which constitutes 65.54% of the total variance.

Table 1: Results of Factor Analysis on Workplace Deviant Behaviour

Items	F1	F2	F3
Factor 1: Interpersonal WDB			
Makes fun of someone at work	0.76	0.03	0.22
Publicly embarrasses someone at work	0.83	0.17	0.16
Plays a mean prank on someone at work	0.79	0.32	0.14
Swears/curses at someone at work	0.61	0.34	0.38
Factor 2: Production WDB			
Takes an additional break or a longer break than is acceptable at workplace	0.08	0.72	0.17
Leaves his or her work to someone else to finish	0.45	0.57	0.06
Taking unnecessary sick leave	0.24	0.66	0.394
Spending too much time fantasizing or daydreaming instead of working	0.36	0.67	0.252
Intentionally works slower than he or she can worked	0.25	0.79	0.11
Factor 3: Property WDB			
Tells someone about the lousy place where he or she works	0.36	0.07	0.64
Takes office equipment/property without permission	0.03	0.11	0.86
Falsifies information (e.g., a receipt claimed or number of hours worked) to get reimbursed for more money than deserve	0.28	0.44	0.55
Discusses confidential organizational information with unauthorized person	0.46	0.42	0.55
Uses office facilities for personal use	0.19	0.29	0.75
Eigenvalues	6.47	1.33	1.23
Percentage Variance Explained	22.62	21.88	20.04
Total Percentage Variance Explained	65.54		
KMO	0.86		
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	2719.64*		
Cronbach's Alpha	0.82	0.79	0.81

Notes: N=355. Bold loadings indicate the inclusion of that item in the factor; *p<0.001; **p<0.01, ***p<0.05.

FACTOR ANALYSIS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT VIOLATION (PCV)

According to the factor analysis on PCV variables presented in Table 2, the KMO value for the PCV items is 0.85 indicating that the items are interrelated and share common factors. Bartlett's test of sphericity is

significant (approx. Chi-square = 4517.95, $p < 0.001$), again indicating the significance of the correlation matrix and the appropriateness for factor analysis. Individual MSA values for all items exceed 0.50 and range from 0.73 to 0.90, which implies that the items represent the underlying structure of the new factors. One item was dropped from further analysis due to its low communality value (less than 0.05). Results of the varimax rotated analysis indicate the existence of three significant factors with eigenvalues greater than one, which constitute 63.64% of the total variance.

Table 2: Results of Factor Analysis on PCV

Items	F1	F2	F3
Factor 1: Growth and Development			
Offer continual professional training ®	0.78	0.19	0.16
Provide opportunities for personal growth ®	0.82	0.29	0.13
Offer career guidance and mentoring ®	0.83	0.19	0.14
Provide job training ®	0.66	0.20	0.26
Offer competitive salary ®	0.57	0.06	0.44
Factor 2: Autonomy and Control			
Provide freedom to be creative ®	-0.24	0.72	0.13
Provide a job that provides autonomy and control ®	0.11	0.69	0.13
Allow participation in decision making ®	0.10	0.77	0.06
Provide increasing responsibilities ®	0.13	0.69	0.11
Provide opportunity to develop new skills ®	0.38	0.65	0.15
Factor 3: Organizational Support			
Provide enough resources to do the job ®	0.13	0.10	0.88
Provide adequate equipment to perform job®	0.16	0.05	0.88
Give flexible work schedule ®	0.24	0.28	0.65
Offer job security ®	0.34	0.21	0.61
Eigenvalues	4.65	2.18	1.48
Percentage Variance Explained	11.81	10.87	10.28
Total Percentage Variance Explained	63.64		
KMO	0.85		
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	4517.95*		
Cronbach Alpha	0.84	0.81	0.81

Notes: N=355. ® = reverse coded statement. Bold loadings indicate the inclusion of that item in the factor; *p<0.001; **p<0.01, ***p<0.05. AIC = Anti Image Correlations

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS, INTERCORRELATIONS AND RELIABILITY

The means, standard deviations, intercorrelations and reliability of the measurements used in this study are presented in Table 3. The respondents of this study indicate that the mean score for WDBI is 1.66 (SD = 0.69), WDBPo is 1.62 (SD = 0.77) and WDBPr is 1.69 (SD = 0.72). The

statistical results indicate a moderate level of PCV with respect to growth and development (mean = 2.79), autonomy and control (mean = 2.85) and organizational support (mean = 2.89), which implies that there is some psychological contract violation by the employer. According to the limit set by Hair *et al.* (2006), > 0.7, the reliability coefficients for all variables are acceptable and thus further analysis could be conducted.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics, correlations and reliabilities

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. InterpersonalWDB	1.66	0.69	1	(0.82)					
2. ProductionWDB	1.62	0.77	0.59**	1	(0.79)				
3. PropertyWDB	1.69	0.72	0.58*	0.63**	1	(0.81)			
4. Growth and Development	2.79	1.08	0.03	0.04	0.09	1	(0.84)		
5. Autonomy and Control	2.85	0.96	0.07	0.09	0.02	0.52	1	(0.81)	
6. Organizational Support	2.89	1.11	0.21	0.04	0.07	0.53**	0.39**	1	(0.83)

Notes: N= 355; *p<0.01; **p<0.05; Reliability coefficients are provided in parentheses

REGRESSION RESULTS

Table 4 presents the results of the regression analysis between the independent variables (comprising of the three PCV dimensions) and the dependent variables (comprising of the three forms of deviant behaviour; WDBI, WDBPo and WDBPr) with respect to the control variables gender, age, organizational tenure and job position. The model variables constitute 8% of the variation in WDBI ($\Delta R^2 = 0.07$, F-change = 0.00, $p < .01$). PCV exhibits significant negative relationships with respect to ‘growth and development’ ($\beta = -0.14$) and ‘autonomy and control’ ($\beta = -0.13$), whereas PCV exhibits an insignificant relationship with respect to ‘organizational support’. Hence, in relation to H1.1a, H1.1b and H1.1c the statistical evidence does not support the hypotheses.

Table 4: Results of Regression Analysis: Impact of PCV on WDB

	Interpersonal WDB (WDBI)	Production WDB (WDBPo)	Property WDB (WDBPr)
	<i>B</i>	β	β
Control Variables			
Gender (Male = 1)	0.09	-0.14	0.03
Age	-0.09	-0.05	0.11
Organizational Tenure	0.07	0.21	-0.14
Job Position	0.01	0.13	-0.07
Model Variables			
Growth and Development β	-0.14**	-0.03	0.10***
Autonomy and Control β	-0.13**	0.19*	-0.13**
Organizational Support β	0.16	-0.01	0.04
R ²	0.08	0.09	0.05
R ² - change	0.07*	0.04*	0.03*
F - change	0.00	0.01	0.02

Notes: N = 355; β = PCV = Psychological Contract Violation; WDB = Workplace Deviant Behaviour; *p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.10.

With respect to the second hypothesis, PCV ‘autonomy and control’ was the only factor significantly and positively related to WDBPo ($\Delta R^2 = 0.04$, $\beta = 0.19$, F-change = 0.01, P<0.01), which supports H2.1c. PCV ‘growth and development’ and ‘organizational support’ exhibit no significant relationships with WDBPo and hence H2 is only partially supported.

Mixed findings were obtained with respect to the effect of PCV on WDBPr ($\Delta R^2 = 0.03$, F-change = 0.02, P<0.10). PCV ‘growth and development’ ($\beta = 0.10$) is significantly and positively related to WDBPr, whereas the converse is true for PCV ‘autonomy and control’ ($\beta = -0.13$), which is significantly and negatively related to WDBPr, and PCV ‘organizational support’ exhibits no significant relationship with WDBPr. It is of note that PCV ‘autonomy and control’ exhibits the largest effect on the criterion, more than PCV ‘growth and development’, and hence the second hypothesis is partially supported.

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study hypothesized that psychological contract violation is positively related to the organizational WDB and interpersonal WDB. Factor analysis revealed three WDB dimensions; interpersonal deviance (WDBI), production deviance (WDBPo) and property deviance (WDBPr), of which WDBPo and WDBPr are the same dimensions identified by Robinson and Bennett (1995). Interpersonal deviant behaviour (WDBI) is a single dimension unto itself, which is in contrast to that identified by Robinson and Bennett (1995). This may be a culture-specific finding, since according to Abdullah (1992) Malaysians are relationship-oriented and value harmony, hence they tend to avoid sensitive interpersonal issues (i.e. public embarrassment of others).

The regression analysis identified that perceived unfulfilled promises due to violation of PC considerably affect employee work behaviour. If an employer violates the PC with regard to 'autonomy and control' and 'growth and development' an employee is likely to act in a deviant manner towards the organization, which is consistent with the work of Kickul (2001) and Kickul and Lester (2001) and the concept of equity (Adams, 1965), but less deviance is targeted to other personnel. The latter observation may be a consequence of employees believing that the establishment of moral relationships and rapport with one another is important (Abdullah, 1996). Furthermore culture influences employee perception of violations of the PC according to Thomas *et al.* (2003) and employees may react with the "appropriate work behaviour" based on their interpretations of the social cues provided by others within the context of the work environment (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978).

In terms of implications, the negative impact of "growth and development" violation on the behaviour of employees suggests that employees view opportunities for growth and development as an important element in their career. Thus, companies should provide well-planned training and development programs for employees coupled with effective awareness initiatives. Bearing in mind the potential repercussions of 'autonomy and control' violation, the management should encourage employees to participate in implementing decisions, which affect their jobs. Supervisors must promote the principles of delegation, whilst clearly outlining their roles and responsibilities as well as the subordinate's. In addition, supervisors must coordinate all activities amongst their

subordinates to ensure success of a participative management style and achievement of departmental goals. The implementation of training would help subordinates in solving job related problems and facilitate airing of views and grievances to their superiors.

This study has limitations that deserve comment; firstly this study adopted a superior ratings method in order to reduce common method bias. However, it is unlikely that superiors are aware of all WDB incidents, because employees are inclined to be tactful when partaking in such acts. Future investigations should adopt a superior-subordinate dyadic method to further reduce common method bias. Secondly, characteristics of the sample may limit the generalizability of the findings; this is in relation to nearly 85% of the respondents being Malay, which is significantly larger than the other ethnic groups, Chinese and Indian. Thirdly, the research design was cross-sectional and the data collected reflected responses for a particular period only, in order to further determine occurrences of employer PCV and causal attributions, it is suggested that future researchers opt for a longitudinal design.

In conclusion, despite several limitations on the generalizability of the present study, this research provides evidence of how PC violation by employers can affect employee work behaviour. Although employees are unlikely to act in a deviant manner against an individual due to PCV, they are likely to target the organization. Organizations should develop well-planned training and development programs to ensure employees and superiors understand the concept of PC. Such training programs should emphasize the development of competencies in participative management, delegation, and coordination among supervisors and managers. At the macro level, organizations should foster a strong ethical culture and values through which employee negative work behaviour can be eradicated. It is hoped that this study will stimulate further research into the identification and understanding of WDB predictors, especially within the local context, and perhaps elucidate better ways to manage or prevent its occurrence.

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