Religiosity and Emotional Stability as Determinants of Citizenship and Deviant Behavior at Work

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Abstract: Individual differences in terms of personality traits have been investigated in relation to employee work behavior. However, very few scholars have included religiosity as an individual difference variable in such investigations. We developed and tested a model to explain how religiosity and emotional stability personality trait) can affect organizational citizenship and deviant behaviors of employees. Analysis of data from 261 public organization employees showed that high religiosity and emotional stability employees were more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behavior and this engagement in turn resulted in lower levels of workplace deviant behavior. Religiosity, emotional stability and organizational citizenship behavior explained 60% of the variance in workplace deviant behavior. The findings underscore the important role of dispositional characteristics in understanding workplace deviant behavior. This is one of the few studies that has examined religiosity as one of the dispositional characteristics, that would impact on employee citizenship and deviant behavior at work. Implications of the results are discussed.

Key words: Religiosity, emotional stability, organizational citizenship behavior, workplace deviant behavior, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

In the last decade or so, there has been a growing interest among researchers in extra-role behaviors, both the positive Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) and the negative Workplace Deviant Behavior (WDB). This interest could possibly be due to the growing evidence of the behavior's influence on organizational and individual performance (Rose, 2016). Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) refers to a set of non-task related behaviors that contribute to organizational goals by improving its psychological and social environments (Rotundo, 2002). WDB is defined as "voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and in so doing threatens the wellbeing of an organization, its members, or both" (Robinson and Bennett, 1995).

It should also be noted that although individual differences in terms of the Big Five personality traits have been investigated in relation to work behavior (Penney et al., 2011; Coyne et al., 2013), very few scholars treat religiosity as an important individual difference variable in such investigations (Singhapakdi et al., 2013; Tang, 2012; Tracey, 2012). Additionally, even though, a

model on the interrelationships between individual characteristics, including religiosity and workplace deviant behavior but not OCB has been proposed (Radzali et al., 2013) this model has not been tested.

The our goal is to provide a better understanding of how individual difference variables, namely religiosity and emotional stability may foster OCB which in turn may deter WDB. The contribution of this study is twofold. First, earlier studies have focused mainly on characteristics of leaders and organizational justice as factors that affect OCB (Jiao et al., 2011; Chun et al., 2013). The findings would add to the paucity of literature on how religiosity is linked to extra-role behaviors, since to the best of our knowledge, this linkage has not been extensively tested. Second, studies have shown mixed results on the magnitude of OCB-WDB linkage and thus further investigations are needed.

Religiosity and emotional stability as antecedents of OCB and WDB: religiosity is a central force which can shape human behavior (Brotheridge and Lee, 2007). Based on the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), an individual's beliefs can influence the individual's

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behavior. It is probable that an individual's religious beliefs may lead the individual to behave positively including the engagement in OCB. Brotheridge and Lee (2007) presented a model that integrates religiosity with employee's perceptions of work, OCB and WDB. Although, Kutcher *et al.* (2010) in their study found a significant relationship between employee's religious beliefs and OCB, the empirical examination of such relationship is still scarce. Thus, we proposed to test the following hypothesis:

- H_1: Religiosity is positively related to OCB

A meta-analysis by Chiaburu *et al.* (2011) supports the notion that personality traits are important determinants of citizenship behavior. In a study by Hudson *et al.* (2012), more emotionally stable adults from a large public organization engaged in more frequent OCB compared with those with less emotional stability. Similar findings were reported by Le *et al.* (2011). Hence, we proposed:

- H_2: Emotional stability is positively related to OCB

Based on the social control theory (Hirsch, 1969) the engagement in WDB could be due to the strength of the institutional bond restraining the negative behavior. The basic elements in institutional bond are attachment, commitment, involvement as well as the common value system held by the society or subgroup. It can be argued that as a bonding mechanism, religiosity can help reduce deviant behavior. There are only few studies that have investigated the influence of religiosity on deviant or unethical behavior. Neill and Hastings (2011) found a significant negative relationship between religiosity and deviant behavior among employed undergraduate students. Chen and Tang found a significant relationship between religiosity and propensity to engage in ethical behavior among undergraduate students. Hence, we proposed:

- H_3: Religiosity is negatively related to WDB

The conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) has previously been used by Penney *et al.* (2011) in their study on the personality-WDB link. According to this theory individuals seek to acquire and conserve resources to reduce stress (Hobfoll, 1989). Individual personality or characteristics such as emotional stability and religiosity are resources which can be used to reduce behavioral strain. Individuals who are low in emotional stability would attempt to conserve their resources or prevent

further loss and lessen their negative feelings by engaging in WDB such as taking longer breaks to reduce their involvement in task performance (Diefendorff and Mehta, 2007). Research has shown that individuals who lack emotional stability are more likely to engage in WDB (Hudson *et al.*, 2012; Penney *et al.*, 2011). Hence, we proposed:

- H_4: Emotional stability is negatively related to WDB

OCB as antecedent of WDB: Although, these two performance dimensions (OCB and WDB) can be viewed as falling on opposite ends of a continuum indicating employees' extra-role behaviors that affect the well-being of organizations, a meta-analysis of the relationship in previous studies generally revealed that the constructs are moderately negatively correlated and they are actually two distinct constructs. Later, similar results were shown by Brien and Allen (2007) while other researchers have found weaker relationships (Lam *et al.*, 2009). Hence, we proposed:

- H_5: OCB is negatively related to WDB

OCB as mediator: The mediation model was developed based on the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), social control theory (Hirsch, 1969) as well as the work of previous researchers that have been discussed in this article. Drawing from the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), individual's religious beliefs may lead the individual to behave positively including the engagement in OCB, thus supporting the religiosity-OCB relationship. The conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) serves as the foundation for the link between emotional stability and WDB. Based on this theory, it can be postulated that individuals who are low in emotional stability would attempt to conserve their resources and lessen their negative feelings by engaging in WDB. In accordance with the social control theory (Hirsch, 1969), the strength of religious beliefs that exist in employees may help restrain employees from engaging in deviant behavior. The relationships between emotional stability and OCB as well as between OCB and WDB have been discussed and the relationships have been supported by empirical findings from earlier studies. Hence, we proposed:

- H_6: OCB mediates the relationship between religiosity and WDB

- H$_7$: OCB mediates the relationship between emotional stability and WDB

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants and procedure: Four hundred public organization employees agreed to participate, of whom 261 (62.25%) returned valid surveys. The mean age of the employees was 32.9 years (SD = 7.77). There were 160 (61.3%) females and 101 (38.7%) males. The religious affiliations of the employees were Islam (86.6%), Christianity (6.9%), Hinduism (3.4%) and Buddhism (3.1%).

Measures: Ten items from Plante and Boccaccini (1997) assessed participants' religiosity using response options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Examples of items include "My religious faith is extremely important to me" and "My faith impacts many of my decisions".

Emotional stability (one of the Big Five factors) was measured using 5 items adapted from Saucier (1994) who developed a shorter version (Mini-Marker) of the Big Five Markers by Goldberg (1992). Response options for this scale ranged from 1 (does not describe me) to 7 (truly describes me). Examples of items include "I am irritable" and "I am fretful". OCB was measured using 11 items from Podsakoff *et al.* (1990) with response options ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (very often). There are four dimensions of the OCB scale and item examples for each dimension are: altruism (for example, "Help others who have heavy workload"), conscientiousness (for example, "Have attendance at work beyond working hours), sportsmanship (for example, "Complains a lot about trivial matters"), courtesy (for example, "Give advance notice when unable to come to work"); civic virtue (for example, "Adhere to informal rules devised to maintain order").

Fifteen items from Robinson and Bennett (1995) were used to measure WDB and participants were asked to rate using response options ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (very often). The four dimensions of this scale and an item example for each dimension are) personal aggression (for example, "Said something hurtful to someone at work") political deviance (for example, "Discussed confidential company information with an unauthorized person") property deviance (for example, "Taken property from work without permission") and production deviance (for example, "Intentionally worked slower than you could have worked").

Data analysis: Means, standard deviations and correlation coefficients between variables were computed.

We used the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) procedure to assess direct, indirect and mediated models. This procedure involves the integration of a measurement model and a structural model (Iacobucci, 2008). The data collected for this study from 261 participants were sufficient for such analysis, since, according to Hoe (2008), the SEM procedure requires data from a sample size of a minimum 200.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The model fit indices for the measurement model were acceptable with RMSEA = 0.08 (RMSEA<.08), (χ^2/df =<0.3), IFI = 0.92 (IFI>0.90), TLI = 0.92 (IFI>0.90), CFI = 0.92 (IFI>0.90), PGFI = 0.64 (IFI >0.50). To assess the construct validity (convergent validity and discriminant validity) of the measures, Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Maximum Shared squared Variance (MSV) and average Shared Squared Variance (ASV) were calculated. The CR and AVE values are above 0.70 and 0.05, respectively, suggesting that all the latent variables have high convergent validity (Table 1). The MSV and ASV values are lower than the AVE values indicating that discriminant validity is established.

The SEM results show that the effects of religiosity on workplace deviant behavior (β = -0.47; p<0.001) and emotional stability on workplace deviant behavior (β = -0.30, p<0.001) shrink upon the addition of OCB (the mediator) to the model (Table 2), suggesting that the mediation model is the best fit model. OCB partially mediates the relationships between religiosity and workplace deviant behavior, emotional stability and workplace deviant behavior.

The model fit indices of Goodness of Fit (GFI = 0.73), Incremental Fit (IFI = 0.92), Tucker-Lewis (TLI = 0.92), Comparative Fit (CFI = 0.92) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = 0.08; χ^2/df = 2.48) were acceptable. The regression coefficients of the mediation model are presented in Fig. 1. Religiosity, emotional stability and OCB explained 60% the variance in workplace deviant behavior. This study, we investigated

Table 1: Validity indices, means and standard deviations

Variables	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	M	SD
EmoSta	0.89	0.63	0.36	0.26	3.96	1.39
Rel	0.97	0.85	0.47	0.25	5.84	1.98
OCB	0.93	0.59	0.30	0.21	4.10	1.32
WDB	0.98	0.76	0.47	0.34	2.84	1.63

Emo Sta = Emotional Stability; Rel = Religiosity; OC = Organizational Citizenship Behavior; WDB = Workplace Deviant Behavior; CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted; MSV = Maximum Shared squared Variance; ASV = Average Shared squared Variance; M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation

Table 2: Standardized regression coefficients for the mediation model

DV	IV	Mediation	Indirect	Direct
OCB	→	ES	0.27***	0.28***
OCB	→	R	0.26***	0.28***
WDB	→	OCB	-0.20***	-0.52***
WDB	→	R	-0.47***	-0.52***
WDB	→	ES	-0.30***	-0.36***

***p<0.001, OCB = Organizational Citizenship Behavior; WDB = Workplace Deviant Behavior; ES = Emotional Stability; R = Religiosity

Fig. 1: Regression coefficients of the mediation model

The model fit indices of Goodness of Fit (GFI = 0.73), Incremental Fit (IFI = 0.92), the effects of emotional stability and religiosity on OCB and consequently on WDB. The results are in support of all the hypotheses postulated. Emotional stability and religiosity were positively correlated to OCB and negatively related to WDB. The OCB was negatively correlated to WDB. The OCB had a partial mediating effect on the relationship between employees dispositional characteristics and WDB. Employees high in emotional stability and religiosity tend to engage more in OCB compared to those low in emotional stability and religiosity. Greater engagement in OCB in turn led to less engagement in WDB. The results indicate that religiosity as a dispositional characteristic, like emotional stability may foster OCB which in turn may deter WDB, thus lending support to the less studied religiosity-OCB linkage, as well as add to the body of literature on the OCB-WDB linkage. The findings of this research have practical implications for enhancing employees positive behavior and the management of employees counterproductive work behavior. Understanding, the role of dispositional characteristics in fostering OCB and deterring WDB can help practitioners enhance behavioral outcomes that are beneficial to organizations in the Malaysian context, specifically among employees in the public sector, where the majority of the employees are Muslims. For many who are religious and emotionally stable, faith as part of who they are as well as what they do and emotional stability as a personality characteristic may shape their behaviors. This can be at least partly explained by the results of this study that religiosity and emotional stability are associated with positive and negative extra-role behaviors.

Kutcher *et al.* (2010) suggested that employers should look into values as they develop and shape the culture of the organization. It must be acknowledged that there are many common values among employees irrespective of their religious affiliations. Hence, employers may need to reward and encourage behaviors that are consistent with employees desired values since according to Kolodinsky *et al.* (2008) employees appreciate when their organizations inculcate common spiritual values, even though they were not themselves spiritual.
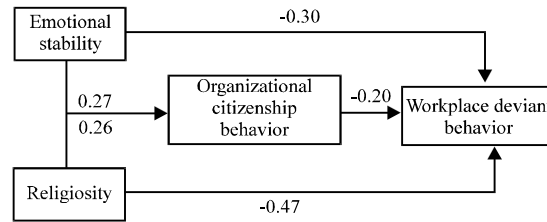
In addition, the results have potential implications for hiring and it may be beneficial to screen applicants based on dispositional characteristics that may promote positive behavior which in turn may prevent the likelihood of engagement in negative behavior. Although, all the employees reported that they are affiliated to a particular religion, it must be recognized that in any setting the screening process which involves values should be one that does not discriminate applicants based on religious affiliation. Employers should be sensitive to the notion that applicants who are not affiliated to or do not practice a particular religion have the same rights as those who are affiliated to or practice the religion. It may also be beneficial to consider screening applicants using a personality-oriented test which measures emotional stability. The measures for screening the applicants may be used when the applicants have been narrowed down to just a few candidates.

The inclusion of religiosity in the model studied is one of the few initial attempts towards understanding how religiosity is associated with extra-role behavior. Future research need to further examine religiosity as one of the employee dispositional characteristics that may influence positive and negative extra-role behavior in other settings. For example, in Malaysia, there is a need to examine such associations in a setting with a different composition of religious affiliation such as the private sector where there tend to be a greater proportion of non-Muslim (Buddhist, Christian and Hindu) employees and hence allows for an analysis that could explore the possible effect of religious affiliation on the relationships among the studied variables. This is crucial since religiosity is positively associated with individual values (Roccas, 2005) and that the value systems of the three main different races, namely Malays, Chinese and Indians (with different religious affiliations) in Malaysia, are partially convergent (Terpstra *et al.*, 2014).

In this study, a potential limitation is the use of self-report survey and hence, common method bias may exist in the results. However, a meta-analysis by

Berry *et al.* (2012) indicated that the relationship between WDB and its antecedents did not differ when self-report measures were used. Additionally, the sample of this study is limited to Malaysian employees in the public sector where the majority of the employees are Muslims and hence the results may not be generalized to employees in other settings. The limited size of each non-Muslim group or even the whole non-Muslim group, does not allow for further examination and comparative analysis of the four different groups or the Muslim and the three other non-Muslim groups as a category. Caution must be exercised in making conclusions on causal relationship due to the cross-sectional design of this study since results confirming mediation could not serve as evidence for causation (Preacher and Hayes, 2004). Hence, it is possible that the directions of the relationships obtained may be contrary to those hypothesized.

CONCLUSION

Employee dispositional characteristics may predict their citizenship and deviant behavior at work. This study explains the likelihood that individuals with certain dispositional characteristics, namely emotional stability and religiosity will exhibit organizational citizenship behavior and consequently will reduce their engagement in workplace deviant behavior. This is one of the few studies that have examined religiosity as one of the dispositional characteristics that would impact on employee work behaviors.

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