Workplace Deviance in the Indian Organizational Context

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Abstract—The acts of workplace deviance are continuously increasing and hence are a matter of concern for today’s organizations. The purpose of this study is to map the prominent deviant behaviors in the Indian organizations and to understand the deviant handling mechanisms in various organizations. Data was collected through in-depth interviews of various HR managers and deviant handlers of Indian organizations. The results of this study would have implications for both managers and academicians as it would give insight into the nature and cause of occurrence of such deviant behaviors and also help in understanding the remedial actions adopted for deviant acts which would thus assist in reducing the frequency of such acts in organizations.

Keywords—Workplace Deviance, Deviant, Handling Mechanisms, India

I. INTRODUCTION

Workplace deviance has become a common issue faced by organizations today. These acts may differ in the severity of harm caused by them; but nonetheless, all of them prove disastrous for the organizations in the long run. These behaviors have resulted in significant human and financial costs to the organizations. The negative impact of such behaviors include disciplinary actions, termination or loss of employees, reputational loss, breach of corporate corporate confidentiality apart from the legal and financial costs associated with them [1].

Research in this field has shown that the acts of workplace deviance are not new, however the transgressions in the workplace are showing an increasing trend with every passing year. With the transformation of workplace with technology, research has indicated that employees are increasingly using technology as a facilitator and amplifier for their deviant acts [2]. This role of technology in transforming the deviant activities have received much attention by the academicians in the form of cyber-crime [3]. The use of Internet has not just given a new face to old acts of deviance but has also given rise to a new set of deviant acts which wouldn’t have existed without it. Some of these acts include spreading of virus, hacking, misappropriation of virtual money, website defacement, misrepresentation of self and cyber-fraud, making deviant acts common in not just financial sector in India, but also other segments too.

As the growing occurrence of deviant acts is a concern for today’s organization, it becomes a significant area to study. The key in identifying deviant acts is the ability to comprehend what lies beneath them. An understanding of how various factors would influence the nature and occurrence of deviant acts in different Indian organizations posed an interesting area of research. Unless an attempt is taken in this aspect, it can prove devastating for the organizations.

The focus of this paper is to understand the nature and occurrence of deviant activities in the Indian organizational setup. It focusses on mapping the prominent deviant cases in the Indian organizations and understanding how the organizations typically handle such cases of employee deviance. An exploratory approach was chosen to have an in-depth understanding of workplace deviance from the HR and the deviant handlers who have the real-time experience with such cases. It would widen our perspective on the situational causes of the deviant activities.

This study has implications for practitioners who want to understand the dark side of employee behaviour in the organization and how its handled within different organizations. It also provides academicians with a direction of research in the area of factors leading to such deviance acts and to explore the factors associated with the implementation of the deviance handling procedures.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Defining Workplace Deviance

Workplace deviance has been studied since a long time; earlier the studies focussed at the specific deviant behaviours but now the studies have extended to look at the overall concept of workplace deviance, thus inclusive of a set of related activities [4]. Robinson & Bennett’s [5] work is the most widely acceptable study in the domain of workplace deviance. Workplace deviance has been defined as an intentional act which is against the said and unsaid norms of the organization and proves harmful for the organization or its members or both. The act is voluntary in the sense that the individual fails to conform to the expectations of the society.

B. Categorizing Deviant activities at workplace

Robinson & Bennett [5] categorized deviance behaviour on the basis of the target of deviant act (interpersonal or organizational) and the degree of harm of the act (minor and major) into four categories, namely, property deviance, production deviance, political deviance and personal aggression. Acts of Production Deviance like taking excessive breaks or leaving early are against the advised norms of the desired minimum level of quantity or quality of work to be achieved. The quadrant of Property Deviance includes those acts where individuals damages or takes possession of the official property without the right consent of the authority, such as sabotaging equipment and stealing from the company. Politically Deviant acts are those where individuals engage in social interactions placing another individual at a political or personal disadvantage. Acts like gossiping, blaming other co-workers come under political deviance. Acts where individuals engage in a hostile manner towards other come under the quadrant of Personal Aggression. According to Robinson and Bennett [5], all the acts of workplace deviance
can be placed under this categorization. Similarly, Weatherbee [6] proposed a categorization of cyber deviance in the existing Robinson and Bennett’s framework including acts like online gambling, web pornography, software piracy, hacking under property deviance; acts of cyberloafing, personal email, online banking and surfing under production deviance; e-politics, selective informing, blame shifting under political deviance and cyber aggression, e-harassment and identity shift under personal aggression. It also incorporates the effect shifts of primary outcomes to secondary outcomes, which is a significant characteristic of cyberdeviance [7]. Venkatraman et al. [8] extended the Robinson & Bennett’s typology to include a third parameter with regards to acts of cyber deviance, which is the level of technical skill (high vs low) required for the deviant act. An attempt has been taken in this paper to place the deviance behaviors observed in the Indian organizations under this categorization by Robinson and Bennett [5]. According to Dietz et al. [9], societal culture determines the deviant activities of the society. In this paper, we would try to revisit this classification with the Indian dataset of deviant acts and see if there is a difference with respect to the Western sample.

For the understanding of deviant behaviors with respect to ethics, Warren [10] helped in understanding workplace deviance by adding an ethical element to the deviant acts. He categorized the acts on the basis of reference group norms and the global normative standards (hypernorms) into four types of categories, namely, destructive conformity, constructive conformity, destructive deviance and constructive deviance. Constructive conformity is an ideal scenario for an organization whereas acts of destructive deviance are those which goes against the group norms as well as the hypernorms. Acts of whistle-blowing which go against the group norms of the organization but follow the hypernorms come under constructive deviance whereas acts which are against the global standard norms but show adherence to the group norms come under destructive conformity.

C. Factors causing Workplace Deviance

These deviant behaviors have resulted in tremendous loss to the organizations. After discussing the basics of workplace deviance, it becomes significant to discuss the factors which increase the likelihood of workplace deviance. It has been observed that the interaction of individual and environmental factors leads to the acts of deviance at workplace [11]. Individual level variables which have been associated with negative deviance behaviour are personality [12], coping [13], self-esteem threat [14], core self-evaluations, workaholism, perceived abusive supervision [15], perceived organizational support [16], negative emotions [17]. The situational antecedents of workplace deviance which have been linked to workplace deviance are monitoring [18], organizational culture [19], work stressors [20], rivalry between groups [21], abusive supervision [22], role of leader [23], societal culture [9]. An attempt has been taken in our study to identify such situational factors which lead to the deviant cases in the Indian organizations.

Data was collected through qualitative interviews with HR managers and deviant handlers of Indian organizations as the practitioners would present the real picture of cases in their organization.

III. BEFORE THE CONFERENCE

For the conference, we expect to have results on the prominent themes from the interviews. We would place the prominent acts prevalent in the Indian organizations under the quadrants proposed by Robinson and Bennett [5] and try to revisit the categorization with regard to the Indian deviant acts. The implementation of the remedial actions taken for such activities in various organizations would throw light on how these activities are typically managed/mismanaged by the organizations and how the organizations can keep a check on the occurrence of such deviant activities. We would also identify the role of technology in workplace deviance.

We look forward to present the paper in this conference and receive feedback on the same.

REFERENCES


