

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP PERCEPTION AND ENGAGEMENT IN WORKPLACE DEVIANT BEHAVIOR

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### **Abstrak**

*Tingkaahlaku devian di tempat kerja bukanlah satu isu baru di dalam sesebuah organisasi kerja. Tingkaahlaku ini dijumpai di dalam banyak organisasi kerja, dan ia melibatkan pelbagai jenis pekerja. Masalah tingkaahlaku ini berbahaya kerana ia membawa implikasi negatif kepada organisasi kerja; sama ada secara sosial mahupun ekonomi. Artikel ini mempunyai tiga objektif utama. Pertama, untuk mengenalpasti prevalens tingkaahlaku devian dalam kalangan pekerja. Kedua, untuk mengkaji jenis-jenis kepimpinan di organisasi kerja. Ketiga, untuk mengukur perkaitan di antara kepimpinan dengan penglibatan pekerja dalam tingkaahlaku devian. Ketiga-tiga objektif berkenaan dikembangkan daripada laporan-laporan literatur akademik yang menyatakan kepimpinan organisasi bertindak sebagai peramal kepada tingkaahlaku devian di tempat kerja. Kajian ini menilai dua bentuk gaya kepimpinan; iaitu gaya kepimpinan karwan dan kepimpinan anjal. Manakala, perspektif devian organisasi dan devian interpersonal digunakan bagi mengukur tingkaahlaku devian. Dapatan kajian memperlihatkan yang kebanyakan organisasi kerja mengamalkan gaya kepimpinan karwan dan anjal. Bukti empirikal juga memperlihatkan yang devian organisasi dan interpersonal wujud di tempat kerja. Malah, kajian ini mendapati terdapat hubungan yang jelas antara kedua-dua bentuk gaya kepimpinan dengan kedua-dua bentuk devian yang wujud di tempat kerja. Dapatan ini kemudiannya mendorong kajian ini untuk menyokong gagasan literatur sedia ada yang memperlihatkan gaya kepimpinan mempengaruhi persekitaran organisasi, yang seterusnya mampu menghalang tingkaahlaku devian di tempat kerja.*

Keywords: Deviant behavior, organizational deviance, interpersonal deviance, leadership, control leadership and flexibility leadership

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## **Introduction**

Deviant behavior is not a new problem in the workplace. This issue has long been discussed and is referred in different terms. Among the terms used include counterproductive behavior, misbehavior and antisocial (Kaptein, 2011; Mohd Shamsudin, 2006; Estes & Wang, 2008). Hence, the conduct is known as prohibited workplace behavior and acts that is contrary to the values and norms of the organization (Appelbaum, Iaconi, & Matousek, 2007; Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007).

Initial study found that there are two perspectives of deviant behavior used, and it refers to the organizational deviance and interpersonal deviance ( Robinson & Bennet, 1995; Robinson, Robertson, & Curtis, 2012). Thus, the recognized deviant behavior transcends all aspects of deviant behavior that affects the organization and deviant that affects individuals.

Organizations with deviant behavior might cause failure in overall organizational performance (Dunlop & Lee, 2004; Bolin & Heatherly, 2001). This is because, organizational deviance led to failure of employees to adhere to corporate work ethics, and as a consequence, organizations bear the burden of cost existed (Everton, Jolton, & Mastrangelo, 2007; Harvey, Heames, Richey, & Leonard, 2006). Interpersonal deviance has weakened the social relationship in the workplace due to psychological pressure experienced by the victim of this behavior (Appelbaum, Deguire, & Lay, 2005; Estes & Wang, 2008). As such, an organization with deviance problem would bring a bad image and negative implications to the organization and the employee.

Past research shows that there are two major factors that influence organizational deviant behavior; which are organizational factors and personal factors (Avey, Palanski, & Walumbwa, 2010; Bodankin & Tziner, 2009). While previous studies focused on the importance of these two factors, organizational elements considered as a dominant factor that influence the existence of deviance problem (Biron, 2010; Browning, 2008; Mohd Shamsudin, Subramaniam, & Ibrahim, 2011), as many studies have demonstrated organizational factors are significant in work stress, and ultimately causing deviant behavior. Leadership is

considered as an important organizational factor leading to deviant behavior, and shown in previous studies that it can influence deviant behavior (Ghosh, Dierkes, & Falletta, 2011; Avey et al., 2010).

Many empirical studies were conducted to identify the contribution of leadership to deviant behavior. Among the factors identified include leadership styles, leadership behavior, leadership approach and leadership personality (Bučiūnienė & Škudienė, 2008; Dineen, Lewicki, & Tomlinson, 2006; Fleet & Griffin, 2006). In many instances, leadership styles which affect employee behavior has been proved to cause employee experience stress and eventually accompanied by physical and psychological symptoms that are partly reflected in deviant acts (Mayer, Kuenzi, & Greenbaum, 2011; Mayer, Thau, Workman, Dijke, & Cremer, 2012). Previous studies confirmed that the control and flexibility leadership contribute to deviant behavior (Mulki, Jaramillo, & Locander, 2006; Nyberg, Holmberg, Bernin, Alderling, Akerblom & Widerszal-Bazyl, 2011; Peng, Tseng, & Lee, 2011).

The present study showed that this deviant behavior arises from employees' perception of the organization's leadership style. Figure 1 illustrates the model of this research. From the figure, we could identify that there are two forms of leadership; control leadership and flexibility leadership. They are also two classifications of deviant workplace behavior; organizational deviance and interpersonal deviance. Thus, the study was undertaken to examine the frequency of deviant behavior and leadership, and whether the two forms of leadership have any association with the two classifications of deviant behavior.

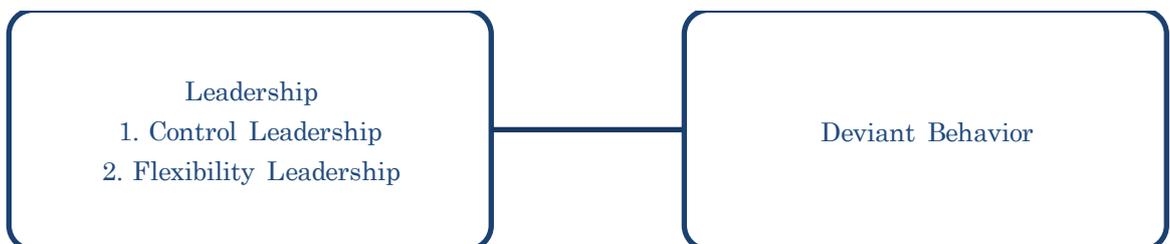


Figure 1: Research Variables

Hence, this study is aimed to examine the employees' perception of deviant behavior and leadership, and to determine its association with the Malaysian public sector environment. The research finding is hoped to assist the government in finding the causes and solutions to the problem.

## **Ulasan Literatur**

### **Deviant Behavior**

Organizational success depends on its human resources. If the employees showed the desired behavior, it facilitates achievement of organizational goals (Raelin, 1986; Rahman & Rahim, 2011). If the employee showed contradictory behavior, or termed as deviant behavior, this will not benefitted the organization because the employee failed to meet the demands of the organization and cause dissatisfaction among users (Steven & Barbara, 2006; Suquet, 2010).

Deviant behavior termed as acts done to bring negative implications to the organization and organizational members ( Appelbaum et al., 2007; Bashir, 2009). Reviews of deviant behavior indicate that, the action is also known as resistance behavior or pessimistic behavior as a direct consequence of perceived negative work environment (Agboola & Salawu, 2011; Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2001).

This article emphasizes the two perspectives of deviant behavior as identified by Robinson and Bennet (1995). Their views defined deviant behavior as organizational deviance and interpersonal deviance. Their views also have been widely used and the most comprehensive deviance model that determine deviance behavior of different target and level of severity (Mohd Shamsudin, Subramaniam, & Alshuaibi, 2012; Mohd Shamsudin et al., 2011; Mohd Shamsudin, 2006).

Organizational deviance is any form of behaviors that give harmful effect to the organization. The behaviors include production and property deviance (Robinson & Bennet, 1995). Overall, organizational deviance is divided into two different forms and the acts violating organizational norms and causing massive financial loss including low in productivity and bad organizational performance (Kuvaas, 2009; Lau & Heldman, 2009; Miller, 1999). Production deviance involves behaviors such as taking an excessive break, work slowly, and focus on self-interest.

While property deviance include the acts of stealing and financial abuse (Marino, 1998; Weber, Kurke, & Pentico, 2003; Wells, 2003). However, production deviance is justifiable deviant conduct. With the consent of the organization, this behavior is allowed to enable employees to rejuvenate and continue their commitment (Dodig-Crnkovic & Anokhina, 2008; Ellwardt, Labianca, & Wittek, 2012).

Meanwhile, interpersonal deviance is classified as behaviors that cause a harmful effect to the individual. This behavior can be divided into political deviance and personal aggression (Robinson & Bennet, 1995). Political deviance involves behaviors such as gossiping, favoritism and blaming others. Personal aggression include yelling or screaming, aggressive eye contact negative rumors, and physical intimidation (Meier & Robinson, 2004; Miron-Spektor, Efrat-Treister, Rafaeli, & Schwarz-Cohen, 2011; O'Boyle, Forsyth, & O'Boyle, 2010).

Interpersonal deviance emerges as a consequence of social relationship at work. Employees involve with this behavior through informal communication, chatting and social networking. These behaviors causing pressure to others, especially targeted victims. As a consequence, it affects the social relationship and later dissatisfaction among the employees (Prendergast & Topel, 1996).

### **Leadership and Deviant Behavior**

Leadership perception plays significant roles within the organizational context (Andrews & Boyne, 2010; Bean, Ordowich, & Westley, 1986). There are many studies that attempt to investigate the effect of leadership perception on organizational outcomes, such as towards organizational performance, employee involvement and employee commitment (Bučiūnienė & Škudienė, 2008). The result of the research have indicated that leadership in an organization is prevalent and necessary in all organizational cycle (Choi & Choi, 2009).

The concept of leadership is based on behavioral theories of leadership. Leadership can be defined as leaders competency, and more specifically how they conceptualize, align, interact and creating success (Dineen et al., 2006; Elçi, Şener, Aksoy, & Alpan, 2012). Previous research has identified that effective leaders possess two leadership behaviors, which are control leadership and flexibility

leadership. These leadership are the most commonly studied by many researchers (Burke, Stagl, Klein, Goodwin, Salas & Halpin, 2006; Huang, Iun, Liu, & Gong, 2010; Hooijberg & Choi, 2001). Result has indicated that leadership perception has an association with deviant behavior, which also supported by studies of Fleet and Griffin (2006), Mulki et al., (2006), and Myers and Myers, (1986).

### **Control Leadership and Deviant Behavior**

Control leadership is leaders' behavior that concern on task and stability. They emphasized on systematic task governance through an efficient workload distribution. This is to ensure that the workload is at the acceptable level. At the same time, leaders also concern on the effectiveness of resources deployments such as financial resources, work equipment and workflow (Feldman, 2003).

Considerable evidence shows that control leadership significantly associated with the deviant behavior. Involvement of leaders at the grass-root level for program implementation and evaluation lead to organizational sabotage. Control leadership also causes hostility, and undesirable behaviors among followers (Ouellette, Lazaer, & Chambers, 1999; Agboola & Salawu, 2011)

### **Flexibility Leadership and Deviant Behavior**

Flexibility leadership concerned with people and organizational adaptability. Leaders show support and sensitive to followers' situation, and environmental change. They show support in humanizing the organization, through various human resources strategies. Leaders develop organizational adaptiveness to ensure a well-balanced internal and external environment (Boal & Schultz, 2007; Kellett, Humphrey, & Sleeth, 2002).

The flexibility leadership is also significantly associated with organizational and interpersonal deviance. Past studies identified the negative association between flexibility leadership and deviant behavior. Flexibility leadership avoids the occurrence of workplace bullying and encourages workplace participation and willingness (Van Ginkel & Van Knippenberg, 2012; Stouten, Baillien, Broeck, Camps, Witte & Euwema, 2010).

## Methodology

The study was conducted in four Malaysian Federal Ministries, and the populations are the managerial employees. In this study, 77 managerial employees agreed to participate. Since the study measure the sensitive issue, the sample are drawn by using non-probability convenience sampling method to ensure respondents voluntarily agreed to involve and to protect their confidentiality (Biron, 2010; Syaebani & Sobri, 2004).

For this study, the data was gathered through a questionnaire. The questionnaire used to measure leadership perception is developed by Hooijberg and Choi (2001). The leadership perception is measured using 20 items and was scored using Likert scale including (1) Never, (2) Rarely, (3) Often and (4) Very Often. The respondents were asked to report the presence or lack of control and flexibility leadership in their organizational environment.

Questionnaire for deviant behavior is measured using a questionnaire developed by Robinson and Bennet (1995). The respondents were asked to report how frequent they observed deviant behavior in the workplace, and deviant behavior was classified into organizational and interpersonal deviance. The deviance behavior was measured using four scales (1) Never, (2) Rarely, (3) Often and (4) Very Often.

## Results and Discussion

The following are the demography and results of the study.

Four ministries; Ministry of Trade and Industry (26%), Ministry of Human Resources (29%), Ministry of Energy, Green Technology and Water (24.7%), and Ministry of Home Affairs (19.5%) involved in the study. The study was conducted among public managers. A total of 77 respondents participated in the study. The majority of the respondents were in the age category of 20-30 years old (45.5%). Others include 31-40 (42.9%), 41-50 (6.5%), and more than 51 years old (5.2%). In term of gender, there are 24 (31.2%) male respondents and 53 (68.8%) female respondents. The majority of the respondents married (61%), only 36.4% were

unmarried and few divorces (2.6%). The data also showed that the majority of the respondents are Muslims (94.8%) and having a degree (48.1%).

### **Leadership Perception**

The results indicate that respondents observe the presence of both control leadership and flexibility leadership. Table 1 shows that employees perceive the presence of control and flexibility leadership high as most of them tend to score between 3 (often) and 4 (very often). This study supports that, in public organizations, flexible and control leadership is a necessity (Andersen & Mortensen, 2010).

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviations of Leadership Perception

Leadership	Mean	Standard Deviations
Control Leadership	3.17	.461
Flexibility Leadership	3.08	.483

As a comparison, control leadership is prevalent in the public sector, as the mean value is higher than the flexibility leadership. Control leadership demonstrates decisiveness, where each activity and resource use should be monitored to avoid negligence that would harm the organization (Martin, Liao, & Campbell-Bush, 2012; Johnson & Klee, 2007).

The finding showed the significance of flexibility leadership, by which organizations adopt openness in dealing with human resources and external parties to ensure continued supports and commitments given (Yukongdi, 2010). This finding also supported studies made by Kellett et al., (2002) and Yukongdi (2010), indicating the need for flexibility leadership in supporting organizational activities and in providing emotional support to the employees.

The finding also reveals that the leadership behavior in the public sector is influenced by the organization's contextual factor. Due to environmental pressures, public organizations experienced several changes and ventured into a partnership that facilitate organizational objectives (Acar & Robertson, 2004; Bies, 2010). Control and flexibility leadership became a desirable leadership behavior to enhance organizational effectiveness and efficiency that would assist in accommodating

organizational and environmental change (Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2001; Metcalf & Benn, 2012).

The presence of control and flexibility leadership is also a consequence of leaders' personal influences. Leaders' behaviors are influenced by leaders' attitude, personality and self-esteem (Alavi & Askaripur, 2003; Alkahtani, Abu-Jarad, & Sulaiman, 2011). These personal factors are more influencing rather than contextual and organizational factor to developing motivation, interest at work and leader's behavior. As such, leaders' personal element promotes their personal quality which enhances positive or desirable leadership behavior shown through control and flexibility leadership (Bipp, Steinmayr, & Spinath, 2008; Bjørkelo, Einarsen, & Matthiesen, 2010).

### **The Occurrence of Deviant Behavior**

The occurrence of the deviant behavior in Malaysian Public Sector as observed by the managerial employees is as in Table 2. From the table, it indicates that all types of deviant behaviors found within the public sector context, regardless of its size, structure and their unique characteristics. It is also showed that all organizations are exposed to deviant behavior due to contextual and situational factor (Bashir, 2009; Fox, Spector, & Miles, 2001).

The findings showed that taking excessive or longer break (83.1%) was reported as the highest organizational deviant, and was followed by employees worked on the personal matter (53.3%), and employees intentionally worked slower (50.7%). On the other hand, less frequent organizational deviance reported in these ministries included padded account (20.8%), accepting a gift (16.9%), and stealing (19.5%).

For the interpersonal deviance, the highest behavior was organizational gossip (72.7%) and followed by favoritism (45.5%). Other than that, the act of blaming others is also observed (35.1%). Less frequent interpersonal deviance involves cursed at work (16%), harassing remark or joke (16%) and physical intimidation (7%).

The result of the study also indicated that the existence of organizational deviance, with the highest involving production deviance such as taking an excessive break. Although the behavior is a deviance conduct, taking an extreme break such as nap at work, was described as tolerable deviant behavior. As reported by previous studies, the behavior is encouraged by employer, because of its restorative features and its relationship with productivity increased (Baxter, 2005; Christensen, Sogaard, Pilegaard, & Olsen Engineer, 2000). However, the existence of property deviance is troubling, which involves padded accounts, and financial abuses. Although the frequency shown is low, but its existence is an enormous loss to the organization because it is unethical and affect organizational trust (Cadsby, Song, & Tapon, 2010; Harris & Bromiley, 2007).

Table 2: Frequency of Deviant Behavior Observed

Deviant Behavior	Frequency	Percent
Organizational Deviance		
1. Production Deviance		
i. Worked on personal matter instead of worked for your employer	41	53.3
ii. Taken an additional @ longer break than is acceptable at your place at work	64	83.1
iii. Intentionally worked slower that you could have worked	39	50.7
2. Property Deviance		
i. Padded an expense account to get reimbursed for more money that you spent on business expenses	16	20.8
ii. Accepted a gift/favor in exchange for professional treatment	13	16.9
iii. Taken property from work without permission	15	19.5
Interpersonal Deviance		
1. Political Deviance		
i. Showed favoritism for a fellow employee @ subordinate employee	35	45.5
ii. Blame someone else @ let someone else take the blame for your mistake	27	35.1
iii. Repeated gossip about a co-worker	56	72.7
2. Personal Aggression		
i. Cursed someone at work	16	20.8
ii. Made an ethnic @ sexually harassing remark @ joke at work	16	20.8
iii. Made someone feel physically intimidated either through threat @ carelessness at work	7	9.1

The result also indicated that political deviance was reported the most frequently occurring behavior compared to interpersonal deviance. These behaviors emerge through informal communication and social networking. Although the

practices are harmful, there were benefits derived from political deviance, especially with regards to organizational gossip. If the gossip is considering one’s career, others may learn from one’s diligence and determination to succeed (Baumeister, Zhang, & Vohs, 2004; Dodig-Crnkovic & Anokhina, 2008). The behavior also facilitates friendship when employees search information about others, personal exchanges, and social bonds. However, if the gossip is negatively spread, it will affect relationship and communication at work (Ellwardt, Labianca & Wittek, 2012; Ellwardt, Steglich, & Wittek, 2012).

**Relationship between Leadership and Deviant Behavior**

Overall, the study found that there is a significant association between control and flexibility leadership and deviant behaviors. Table 3 indicates that both control and flexibility leadership has an association with organizational and interpersonal deviance based on the Pearson Product Moment coefficient value.

Table 3: Correlation between Leadership and Deviant Behavior

		MEAN	SD	Control Leadership	Flexibility Leadership
Control Leadership		3.170	.461	1	.844**
Flexibility Leadership		3.076	.483	.844**	1
ORGANIZATIONAL DEVIANCE	Personal Matter	1.57	.572	-.246*	-.267*
	Additional break	1.96	.549	-.268*	-.246*
	Worked slower	1.58	.636	-.324**	-.321**
	Padded an account	1.26	.571	-.098	-.198
	Accepting gift	1.17	.377	-.058	.014
	Taking property	1.19	.399	-.016	-.034
INTERPERSONAL DEVIANCE	Favoritism	1.49	.576	-.205	-.364**
	Blaming others	1.39	.566	-.241*	-.298**
	Gossip	1.96	.733	.041	-.042
	Cursed others	1.21	.408	-.027	.029
	Harassing remark	1.22	.448	.085	.049
	Physical Intimidation	1.09	.289	.036	-.067

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

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

 Significant relationship

However, under organizational deviance, only three items show a small and medium significant negative relationship with control leadership which include *worked on personal matters* ( $r = -.246, p < 0.05$ ), *taking additional or longer break* ( $r = -.268, p < 0.05$ ) and *intentionally worked slower* ( $r = -.324, p < 0.01$ ). Similarly, the same items have a small and medium significant negative relationship with flexibility leadership; *worked on personal matters* ( $r = -.267, p < 0.05$ ), *taking additional or longer break* ( $r = -.246, p < 0.05$ ), and *intentionally worked slower* ( $r = -.321, p < 0.01$ ).

While under interpersonal deviance, all items showed no significant relationship with control leadership except one item; *blaming someone else* has a small negative correlation coefficient value ( $r = -.241, p < 0.05$ ). Interpersonal deviance has also a medium significant relationship with flexible leadership for items *favoritism* ( $r = -.364, p < 0.01$ ) and *blaming someone else* ( $r = -.298, p < 0.01$ ).

The finding shows that employees acknowledge the contribution of leadership in their work environment. The significant relationship between leadership and deviant behavior indicate that the roles of leadership are not confined to limited aspects especially in governing works matters, but also contribute to employee's behavioral outcomes (Bean et al., 1986). As mentioned by Dineen et al., (2006) leaders is considered as an important contextual factor that influences employees behavior.

Significant negative relationship exist between organizational deviance and interpersonal deviance with both control and flexibility leadership shows that employees agreed with leaders as a reliable role model in developing social organizational norms (Fleet & Griffin, 2006). The emphasis of control and flexibility leadership has a positive effect on employees' behavior. In contrary, if leaders fail to focus on control and flexibility leadership, this will invite negative or harmful behavior among followers, or leaders able to influence the attitudinal aspect (Johnson & Klee, 2007).

Although deviant behavior correlates with the control and flexibility leadership, the insignificant correlation coefficient values indicate that leadership is

not a sole influencing factor of deviant acts. Under interpersonal deviance, gossip was frequently observed. However, it has an insignificant correlation value that indicates that leadership is not the influencing factor to this behavior. As mentioned by Kantur (2010), and Lee and Brotheridge (2011), there are various factors that can influence the employees behavioral outcome, which include various contextual factors, situational factors, and personal factors. Within the organizational environment, these factors interact with each other and potentially influence deviant behavior. As such, deviance behavior is still occurring despite the organizational leadership factor.

## **Conclusions**

The study showed that control and flexible leadership is practiced in the public sector. These leadership styles provide a supportive environment, where it facilitates the planning of the organization and develops value-added human resources through the leadership practiced (Bean et al., 1986).

Further, the study also found that both deviant behaviors are still present in the public organization based on deviance framework developed by Robinson and Bennett (1995). This will provide useful inputs to the public organization regarding deviant behavior shown in different forms. Awareness of the deviance problem and its implications can generate proactive measures to help prevent the problem from getting worse.

The negative association between leadership and deviant behavior is also consistent with the general literature on workplace deviance that argues negative behavior is a response to the unfavorable work environment. The higher the presence of control and flexibility leadership, the lower deviant behavior observed. Although leaders are considered as the source of workplace motivation, failure to function as demanded by the environment generate an increase in deviant behavior (Avey et al., 2010; Bean et al., 1986).

In sum, employees, in general, develop confidence in leaders as a reliable model in developing social organizational norms that support leaders' conventional roles (Dineen et al., 2006). As such, to manage the occurrence of organizational and

interpersonal deviance, the organization must emphasize on the control and flexibility leadership orientation.

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