**Transformational Leadership and Deviant Workplace Behaviors: The Moderating Role of Organizational Justice**

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**Abstract**

Transformational leadership differs from other leadership type especially transactional one on the basis of its moral influence on the followers. This extraordinary form of leadership raises both the leader and the follower to a different level of morality and values. In this fiercely competitive business world the obsessive focus on end result prompts followers to sometimes deviate from the rule and commit organizational crime. Transformational leaders help the followers find moral meaning in their action, inspire them to be just and ethical and thereby keep a check on their wayward or deviant behaviours. This study strives to explore causal linkage between transformational leadership and deviant work behaviours of the employees. This paper also investigates the moderating role of organizational justice between transformational leadership and deviant workplace behaviours which causes great financial hardship to both the organization and its stakeholders. Organizational justice is the employees’ perception of justice or fairness at workplace. Although it is common knowledge that organizational injustice will increase deviant behaviours at workplace yet there is a clear deficit in terms of conceptual as well empirical studies. Hence, this study attempts to shed light on the three organizational behaviour constructs which will improve our understanding and will help future researches. A conceptual model is offered and few propositions are stated.

**Keywords:** Transformational Leadership, Deviant Workplace Behaviors, Organizational Justice
1. Introduction

In the recent wake of several corporate scandals, unethical and deviant workplace behaviour has become a prevalent problem in organization across the world. One study estimates that between 33 and 75 percent of all employees have engaged in serious deviant behaviours such as theft, fraud, vandalism, and sabotage at least once in their professional life (Harper, 1990). Another report mentions other types of harmful deviant behaviours such as lying (DePaulo & DePaulo, 1989), spreading rumours (Fox, Spector & Miles, 2001), withholding effort (Kidwell and Bennett, 1993) and absenteeism (Johns, 1997).

These toxic behaviours violate workplace rules and therefore are considered to be an antisocial type of behaviour (Robinson and Bennett, 1995). The frequency and nonchalance with which this antisocial behaviour is growing in organization is a matter of great concern for all the stakeholders hence, organizational scholars have focused, with vigour, on various forms of negative behaviours in the workplace, its antecedents and ways by which it can be curbed (Fox, Spector & Miles, 2001; Fisher, 2003).

Employee theft, fraud, sexual harassment and sabotage of property, as well as playing mean pranks, acting rudely, hoarding information and arguing have been suspected to be the fastest growing deviance workplace behaviours among Indian workgroups in recent times.

The growing interest in workplace deviance behaviours among both the academicians and executives is obvious considering the burgeoning prevalence of this type of behaviour in the workplace and the enormous economic and social costs associated with such behaviours (Fisher, 2003; Robinson & Bennett, 1995; Peterson, 2002). Today, workplace deviant behaviour has become an urgent concern for organization and a topic of increasing research attention (Bennett & Robinson, 2003). Several studies in the recent past have identified and documented not only the financial impact it, but also the social and psychological effects of negative workplace behaviour on the organization (Murphy, 1993). Therefore, the rampant existence of deviance at workplace and its associated organizational costs demands a specific, systematic, theoretically focused program of study to understand and curb such destructive behaviour. Unfortunately till date, relatively little empirical research has directly addressed this generally misunderstood and neglected side of employee behaviour (Vardi & Wiener, 1996). Organisational behaviour literature is replete with studies on desirable phenomenon such as organizational citizenship behaviour (Organ, 1988); Commitment (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982) and adaptation (Hulin, 1991) but the neglect of the abusive and toxic behaviour at workplace necessitates immediate attention.

There are several reasons cited to have induced or trigger such negative behaviours among employees, one among them is the type of leadership. It is generally accepted fact among the researchers that apart from personal disposition of the employee, the type or
quality of leadership can play important role in either bolstering or curbing such destructive behaviours. Burns (1978) in his seminal work emphasized the need or urgency of a type of leader who with his/her commitment and integrity can transform the value configuration of its employees. Such a leadership doesn’t harp on transactional means and tries to develop a more meaningful and ethical relationship with the followers. In this process the leaders transforms as mentors or moral agents whereas the follower becomes the leader. Bass (1985) supported the assertion of Burns by differentiating transformational leadership from the transactional ones. Further, he was of the opinion that such a meaningful and constructive relationship between the leader and follower will help in developing moral values with the follower which will guide him/her during ethical dilemmas.

Although the ethical and moral side of the transformational leadership has been discussed in several conceptual papers but there is still a huge void in terms of explaining how transformational leadership can curb deviant workplace behaviours. This study is a valiant step in this direction which will create the much desired interest among the researchers to establish a categorical relationship between type of leadership and deviant workplace behaviours.

Another part of the study focuses on the role of organizational justice in moderating the relationship between transformational leadership and deviant workplace behaviours. Organizational justice is defined as the just and fair treatment meted out to individuals within an organization (Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997). It is the way an employee perceives and assesses justice or fairness at workplace. Although recent years have witnessed a steady increase in the number of studies pertaining to organizational justice the area has not seen similar kind of enthusiastic response from Indian scholars. Hence the current study will strive to make an attempt to understand its role in influencing the relationship between transformational leadership and deviant workplace behaviours.

2. Review of the Literature
2.1 Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership differs from all other types especially from transactional leadership in terms of ethical orientation and noble intention of leader. Unlike the previous transactional or exchange theories, transformational leadership appeal to the followers morality and ethics, hence creates a beautiful relationship with the follower where the intention is to serve organisation and society not self. Burns’ (1978) generous citation of Mahatma Gandhi’s example emphatically speaks of the emphasis given to moral values and ethical intentions. Although initially it was difficult to conceptualize such a leadership, Bass (1985) conducted first serious attempt to unravel the mystery from this extraordinary form of leadership. In his quest to seek answers related to transformational leaders he interviewed
several senior South African business leaders. Bass found that transformational leader is not a myth but reality since almost all the managers agreed to have at least met one person in their life who displayed such characteristics. Of all the classifications, the New leadership (Bryman, 1992) or, Neo-charismatic leadership (House & Aditya, 1997) has been the most popular and the most researched one. This genre which include transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985, 1990; Bass & Avolio, 1994), charismatic leadership (Conger & Kanungo, 1987, 1988; Shamir et al, 1993), and visionary leadership (Sashkin, 1988) is called Neo charismatic since charisma is common attribute in all. In his quest to look beyond the common leadership traits, styles and behaviours, researched in last few years, Burns (1978) identified two types of leadership styles, transformational and transactional leadership. His construct of transformational leader, based on a qualitative analysis of the biographies of various political leaders. According to Burns (1978), transformational leadership “occurs when the leader and the led both engage with each other in such a way that both raise each other to higher levels of motivation and morality,” and this results in a transforming effect on both leader and the follower. Bass (1985) developed his concept of Transformational leadership on this by studying managers in South Africa and described transformational leadership in terms of the impact it has on the followers.

Transformational leadership consists of four factors—charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. According to Bass, Idealized behaviour or ‘charisma’ refers to behaviour that arouses strong emotions in followers and identification with the leader. Idealized behaviour is further divided into two factors—idealized influence attributed and idealized influence behaviour (Bass, 1998). Inspirational motivation involves articulating a strong, compelling vision by the help of symbols to channelize subordinate’s effort. It also set a norm for follower’s to emulate appropriate behaviours. Intellectual stimulation refers to the behaviour that heightens awareness of problems and motivates followers to view problems from a novel perspective. Individualized consideration is the fourth factor which includes lending support and guidance to followers.

Although the literature of transformational leadership is replete with the importance of ethics and values attached to transformational leaders by leadership researchers, there is a clear deficit in terms of conceptual and empirical investigations in Indian context. This study strives to shed light on how transformational leaders affect the work behaviours of their followers.

2.2 Deviant Workplace Behaviours
Deviance at the workplace has been defined as all those actions committed by organizational members that have, or are intended to have, the effect of hurting coworkers, supervisors, or the organization itself (Bennett & Robinson, 2003; Robinson & Bennett, 1995; Robinson & Greenberg, 1998). Academic researchers and psychologists originally defined workplace deviance as employee behaviors that flout important organizational norms and threaten to hamper the reputation of the organization and/or hurt the members of the organization (Robinson & Bennett, 1995), but like many other topics in organizational behavior it also suffers from lack of consensus about operational definition (Bennett & Robinson, 2003).

The amount of research into deviant work behaviors has grown substantially during the last decade; this has led to an overabundance of definitions of workplace deviant behaviors. Although, there are plenty of definitions of deviant behaviors, still most prominent areas of research are antisocial behavior, counterproductive behavior, dysfunctional behavior, and organizational misbehavior.

The first classification of deviant behavior included the concept of property deviance and production deviance. These above mentioned frameworks were considered far from being adequate since they didn’t account for deviant acts of an interpersonal nature, such as physical aggression and sexual harassment; and only included acts against organizations. The latter frameworks of deviant workplace behavior also included social aspects to the organization-directed forms of deviance. Adding to the existing list of classifications, Robinson and Bennett (1995) introduced a typology of deviant workplace behaviors based on the interpersonal aspect. The framework consists of the following two dimensions:

1. Minor vs. Serious
   This describes the severity of the deviant behavior

2. Interpersonal vs. Organizational
   The above represents the target of the deviant behavior i.e. who gets hurt by such actions.

The combination of these two dimensions produces four different types of deviance. The types are Production Deviance (e.g. damaging work, or the progress of work), Property Deviance (e.g. abusing or stealing company property), Political Deviance (e.g. slandering others or spreading malicious rumours), and Personal Aggression (e.g. being hostile or violent toward others). The four types are not mutually exclusive but rather are sinisterly interlinked. Deviant behaviors start with minor deviance from norms, and when these transgressions go unchecked or uncurbed they lead to more severe and serious deviant behaviors (Bennett & Robinson, 2003).

Antisocial behaviors include behaviors that causes harm or intend to harm an organization, its employees, or the organizational stakeholders. Such behaviors include aggression (both
verbal and physical), discrimination, theft, sabotage, harassment, lying, revenge, and whistle blowing.

Counterproductive behavior is defined as “any intentional behavior on the part of an organization member viewed by the organization as contrary to its legitimate interests”. Counterproductive behavior includes theft, property destruction, abuse of information, unsafe behavior, absenteeism, and shoddy work. Dysfunctional behavior occurs when certain acts committed have negative consequences for the members of the organization, and/or the organization itself. Organizational misbehavior is considered as a deliberate act by an organizational member that violates basic organizational and/or societal norms. Such misbehavior intends to benefit an individual or the rival organization and generally includes an objective to inflict damage.

3. Transformational Leadership and Deviant Workplace Behaviors

Transformational leaders are considered ethical and morally upright owing to their ethical orientation. Such leaders understand importance of moral values in one’s life and refrain from breaching any rules or regulations. Transformational leaders are the role models to their followers; hence their action and philosophy deeply impact the psyche of the followers. These ethical leaders dissuade their followers to engage in unethical and anti-social behaviours. The fear of losing the trust of the transformational leader acts as a strong deterrent to behave unethically. This acts as moral deterrent and guides the followers towards right and ethical direction.

In recent years the number of corporate scams and organizational wrongdoing has increased in leaps and bounds. One of the reasons for this unprecedented and unbridled escalation in corporate wrongdoing is lack of moral leadership at the top. Transformational leaders provide that moral guidance to their followers and steer them away from displaying deviant workplace behaviours. Previous studies have implied that transformational leadership is significantly related to employees’ productive and just behaviour. According to Organ, Podsakoff, and MacKenzie (2006), transformational leadership promote cooperation among the subordinates and motivate them to work together toward a super ordinate goals even if that means to sacrifice some of their personal goals and aspirations. Transformational leaders guard their employees against toxic and unproductive behaviours at workplace (Hepworth & Towler, 2004).

Hence we propose that

Proposition 1: Transformational Leadership will be negatively related to employees’ deviant work behaviours.

4. The Moderating Role of Organizational Justice
Organizational justice is defined as the just and fair treatment meted out to individuals within an organization (Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997). According to Byrne and Cropanzano, (2001, p. 4) “At its most general level, organizational justice is an area of psychological inquiry that focuses on perceptions of fairness in the workplace. It is the psychology of justice applied to organizational settings”. The term ‘organizational justice’ was coined by French in 1964 to refer in general to all kinds fairness issues in personnel management (French 1964), but it was Greenberg (1987) who first used the term specifically to refer to people’s perceptions of fairness in organization. Although the terms ‘justice’ and ‘fairness’ are used interchangeably in the literature (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; French 1964; Sheppard et al.1992), in this study we will stick to the term ‘justice’.

Organizational justice framework proposes three types of perceived justice; they are distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice (Bies & Moag, 1986). The fourth one that is informational justice is added later to the existing literature. Distributive justice reflects the perceived fairness or unfairness of outcomes (Adams, 1965). When people perceive their work outcomes to be unfair in comparison to others, they attempt to restore justice or a sense of equity (Adams, 1965). They act to restore justice by reducing work input or engage in disruptive activities in order to rebalance the input–output ratio (Sheppard et al.1992). Procedural justice involves the perceived fairness or unfairness of the procedures, rules and regulations used to make outcome decisions. In case of procedural injustice employees retaliate by exhibiting deviant behaviors against their supervisors and organization because processes and procedures are formulated and implemented by top management and at the organizational level (Bies & Moag, 1986). Interactional justice refers to any perceptions of justice or injustice toward the quality of interpersonal treatment (Bies & Moag, 1986). People may perceive interactional injustice when their supervisors or co-workers ill-treat them or demonstrate abusive attitudes or behaviors towards them. Informational justice focuses on the amount (quantity) and quality of information provided concerning to organization procedures and outcomes (Colquitt 2001; Greenberg 1990). Clarity, adequacy, transparency and sincerity of communication regarding a decision are important antecedents of informational justice. Employee will perceive informational injustice when they witness lack of transparency in terms of critical information distribution or in other words hoarding of important information at workplace.

Organizational justice plays a significant role in engaging people in a meaningful and constructive way. But any injustice actual or perceived can break the trust of employees on their leader and their organization, the consequence of which will be toxic and unproductive activities by employees. Although the number of studies in the area of organizational justice has significantly increased (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001), its role as
moderator in the relationship between transformational leadership and deviant workplace behaviours is far from being convincing.

Hence we state that,

**Proposition 2**: Organizational justice will moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and employees’ deviant work behaviours.

### 4.1 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Moderating role of Organizational Justice between Transformational leadership and Deviant Workplace Behaviours.

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### 5. Conclusion

Following several corporate scams and scandals deviant workplace behaviours have become a major research area for both practitioners and academics. Although there has been several mentioning of ethical side of transformational leadership, the area still lacks sufficient empirical studies. Transformational leaders appeal to the followers ethical values, hence the job becomes a sacred duty and any transgression is unacceptable. Another striking feature of transformational leader is their zero tolerance attitudes towards any wrongdoing which acts as a deterrent to any follower who tries to breach the rules and regulations. In today’s fiercely competitive business world where laws are brazenly broken, rules and regulation are defiantly flouted we need more of leaders who understand the implication of ethical decisions and inspire next generation to engage in moral acts. Transformational leadership holds answer to this difficult but important problem. This article also shed light on the role played by organizational justice in restricting deviant behaviours at workplace and contributes the efforts of transformational leaders in grooming moral and upright employees and corporate citizens.

### References


