

The Effects of Co-Workers' Social Undermining Behaviour on Employees' Work Behaviours

Lin Dar Ong, University of Malaya, Malaysia

Angeline Tay, University of Malaya, Malaysia

Abstract

This study examines the extent to which trust in co-workers mediates the relationships between co-workers' social undermining behaviour and employees' work behaviours. Two structured questionnaires were designed to collect data from employees and their co-workers. The mediating role was investigated using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) from 502 employees in Malaysia. The SEM analysis showed that co-workers' social undermining behaviour had indirect relationships with employees' work behaviours via the mediating role of trust in co-workers. The results of this study highlighted the importance of curbing social undermining behaviour in the workplace in order to instil trust among employees and better work behaviours in the workplace.

Keywords: social undermining behaviour; trust in co-workers; organizational citizenship behaviour; counterproductive work behaviour; Malaysia

1. Introduction

The importance of trust in co-workers is magnified by the prevalence of work team and tasks interdependence in organizations (Lau & Liden, 2008). As employees and their co-workers have equal power, trust is considered as the hallmark of effective relationships among them. Trust is important because it is a precursor to quality social exchange relationships and it could contribute towards improving the performance of employees (Dirks & Skarlicki, 2009; Ferres, Connell, & Travaglione, 2004). Trust can affect the amount and accuracy of information sharing in a social network (Droege, Anderson & Bowler, 2003). Employees feel more comfortable to exchange information and knowledge with their co-workers when they have positive expectations of how the co-workers will utilize the information (Jones & George, 1998). Trust in co-workers is essential because employees work with others to successfully accomplish relevant task and shared goals. According to Parker, Williams, and Turner (2006), individuals who trust their co-workers are more likely to feel more in control on their work outcomes and they have higher affective commitment.

Scholars have devoted much effort to uncover the antecedents of trust. Traditionally, their work focussed mainly on perceived trustworthiness. Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) posit that the trustworthiness of trustees comprises of attributes such as their ability, benevolence, and integrity. Past research on trust has demonstrated that the three attributes contribute to the prediction of trust (Kiffin-Petersen & Cordery, 2003; Mayer & Davis, 1999; Tan & Tan, 2000). Tan and Lim (2009), using full-time agents of a life insurance company in Singapore as samples, reveal that co-workers' benevolence and integrity factors were significantly and positively related to trust in co-workers. This study extends Tan and Lim's work by examining co-workers' social undermining behaviour as antecedent of trust in co-workers. The aim of the current study is to show that co-workers' social undermining behaviour has an indirect impact on work behaviours through trust in co-workers. It is expected that when employees do not perceived themselves as the targets of co-workers' social undermining behaviour, they would trust more in co-workers, and thereby perform more citizenship behaviour and commit less counterproductive behaviour.

1.1 Social undermining behaviour and trust in co-workers

Negative events in organization can be critical in undermining trust (Mishra, 1996). Duffy, Ganster, and Pagon (2002) regard the experience of being the target of social undermining behaviour as a negative event. They define social undermining as a form of negative behaviour that is, '...intended to

hinder, over time, the ability to establish and maintain positive interpersonal relationships, work-related success, and favourable reputation' (Duffy et. al., 2002: 332). Examples of social undermining behaviour in the workplace include delaying work to make others look bad and hurting the feelings of others.

Morrison and Robinson (1997) perceive undermining behaviour as a violation of the relational contract and suggest that it may lead to serious individual and organizational consequences. Social undermining behaviour of co-workers could lead to workplace conflict as people are likely to respond to negative behaviour by retaliating with similar behaviour (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Lau and Cobb (2010) suggest that relationship conflict between co-workers may adversely affect employees' trust for one another. Given that relationship conflict often involves negative behaviour (Ilies, Johnson, Judge, & Keeney, 2011), it is anticipated that co-workers' social undermining behaviour would diminish trust in co-workers.

Although trust can be examined at multiple levels such as at the individual (e.g., supervisors, teammates, and co-workers), organisational, inter-organisational, and international levels, the present study focuses on trust in co-workers. Tan and Lim (2009) adapt Mayer et. al.'s (1995) definition of trust and define trust in co-workers as, '...the willingness of a person to be vulnerable to the actions of fellow co-workers whose behaviour and actions that person cannot control' (p. 46). Co-workers may be the employee's team members, but not necessarily so. The term 'co-workers' in this study encompasses employees who work in the same department and report to the same boss; they do not necessarily belong to the same team.

The relationships between employees and their co-workers entail equality matching (Fiske, 1992). According to Fiske, if an individual provides emotional and behavioural resources to another party, the individual expects that the other party would return a similar and relatively equal amount of resource in the future, even with an unspecified obligation. This shows that interactions between employees and their co-workers are based on reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). Since there is no guarantee of reciprocation, trust is therefore central to exchanges between employees and their co-workers.

1.2 Organizational citizenship behaviour and counterproductive work behaviour

The importance of organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) and counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) is widely recognized in more recent research literature (e.g., Johnson, Tolentino, Rodopman, & Cho, 2010; Le et. al., 2011). OCB refers to employees' extra role behaviour that improves the functioning of an organisation (Organ & Paine, 1999). CWB, on the other hand, denotes voluntary acts by an employee that harms, or at least intended to harm, the legitimate interests of an organisation and/or its members (Sackett & DeVore, 2002). Both OCB and CWB may be directed at the organisation or at any specific individuals within the organisation such as the supervisors and the co-workers (Dalal, Lam, Weiss, Welch, & Hulin, 2009). Past research has noted that OCB and CWB are distinct constructs (Dalal, 2005).

According to the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; as cited in Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997), there is an unspoken obligation to reciprocate quality social interactions. Consistent with the theory, past research has noted that employees are more likely to engage in OCB whenever they trust that their employer would act in their interests (Organ, 1998). In addition, studies on workplace social exchange relationships suggest that employees tend to exhibit OCB to reciprocate high quality leader-member exchange relationships (Ilies, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007). Likewise, employees are more likely to help others in their groups when they have high quality team-member exchange (Kamdar & Van Dyne, 2007).

According to Penney and Spector (2005), job stressors such as heavy workload, interpersonal conflict, and organisational constraints could elicit negative emotions such as anger, because the job stressors could prevent employees from achieving desired objectives, and may in turn lead to job strains such as CWB. Mount, Ilies, and Johnson (2006) report that job dissatisfaction is related to both the organisation-targeted CWB (CWBO) and individuals targeted CWB (CWBI). This is because when individuals are dissatisfied with their jobs, they are likely to reciprocate with negative work behaviour or exert less effort in their work.

Past literature suggest that employees' trust in the organisation mediates the relationships between negative experiences at work and various attitudes and behaviours of employees. According to Lo and Aryee (2003), trust in organisation mediates the relationships between psychological contract breach and employees' psychological withdrawal behaviour, civic virtue, and turnover intentions. Similarly, Montes and Irving (2008) show that organisational trust mediates the relationships between relational contract breach and employees' outcomes such as satisfaction, feelings of violation, and employment intentions.

It is anticipated that when employees experience co-workers' social undermining behaviour, they would lose trust in their co-workers, and they in turn are more likely to retaliate by engaging more in

CWB and less in OCB. This is perhaps the first study to determine if trust in co-workers mediates the relationships between co-workers' social undermining behaviour and employees' work behaviours.

2. Research model and hypotheses development

The aim of this study is to empirically test the role of trust in co-workers as a mediating variable between co-workers' social undermining behaviour and employees' work behaviours. Figure 1 shows the research model of this study. It illustrates diagrammatically the relationships among the constructs in this study.

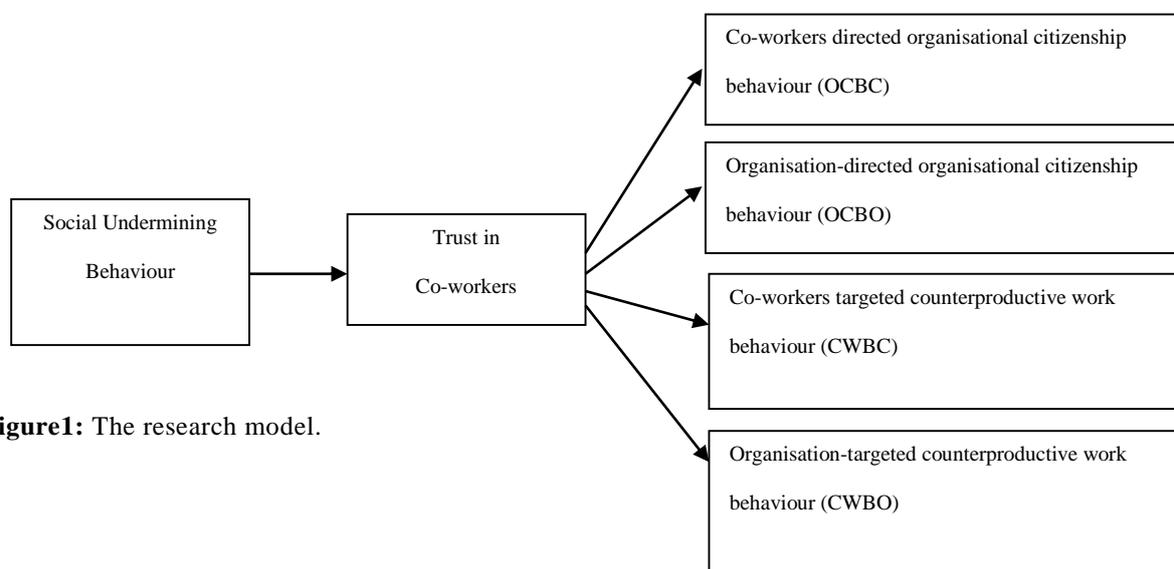


Figure1: The research model.

The social information processing theory suggests that individuals' behaviour may be influenced by cues or social information from the social environment and through observations of the behaviour of others (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Past studies predominantly focussed on the positive aspects of workplace relationships such as social support, leader-member exchange (LMX), mentoring relationships, and helping behaviour. Relatively less attention has been devoted to the social undermining behaviour in the workplace (Duffy et. al., 2002). Such behaviour may adversely affect individual and organisational well-being. According to Duffy et. al. (2002), supervisors' social undermining behaviour leads to decreased organisational commitment. Crossley (2009) suggests that it is crucial to understand the victims' reactions to social undermining behaviour in order to promote healthy relationships, increase trust and cooperation, and prevent conflicts in the workplace.

Previous research suggests that unpleasant experiences at work could be related to the lack of trust. Experiences of psychological contract violations, according to Robinson (1996), are negatively related to trust within an employee-employer relationship. Similarly, Hill, Eckerd, Wilson, and Greer (2009) report that unethical buyer's behaviour is negatively related to trust in the buyer in a buyer-supplier relationship. Besides, past research has demonstrated that trust could be undermined through job stressors. For instance, relationship conflict among team members contributes to lower trust in team members (Langfred, 2007). Likewise, Lau and Cobb (2010) hypothesize that relationship conflict with co-workers could negatively affect trust in co-workers.

Social undermining behaviour refers to intentional discourteous behaviour in the workplace intended to demolish other parties' favourable reputation, their ability to carry out their work, or their ability to build and sustain positive relationships (Duffy et. al., 2002). Such behaviour therefore could be regarded as a job stressor. Job stressors often trigger negative emotional responses such as anger in an individual (Fox, Spector, & Miles, 2001), thereby could lead to dissolution of trust (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005; Kiefer, 2005). We therefore hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 1: Co-workers' social undermining behaviour is negatively related to trust in co-workers.

Trust influences employees' behaviour towards others at work and plays an important role in social exchange among organisational members (Rubin, Bommer, & Bachrach, 2010). Organ (1990) indicates that employees are more likely to reciprocate positive treatment they received from others by engaging in citizenship behaviour. The reciprocation is generally based on the beliefs or expectations that

the others will fulfil their obligations in the future (Coyle-Shapiro, 2002; Konovsky & Pugh, 1994). A meta-analysis by Colquitt et. al. (2007) summarizes the impact of trust on employees' job performance. They conclude that employees who trust their managers have better task performance, engage more in OCB, and commit less CWB.

Trust in supervisor has been shown to be related to the supervisor-directed citizenship behaviour (Wech, 2002). Researchers suggest that employees who trust their supervisors are more likely to engage in OCB (e.g., Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Mayer & Gavin, 2005; Poon, 2006). There is also some empirical support that trust in co-workers is positively related to individual's OCB. Through a longitudinal study, Choi (2006) reports that trust among organisational members tend to increase employees' helping behaviour (i.e., one of the OCB dimensions). Trust in co-workers, according to Parker et. al. (2006), is related to proactive work behaviour (i.e., a behaviour that encompasses both task performance and OCB). In addition, Settoon and Mossholder (2002) show that trust in co-workers is positively related to individuals directed OCB.

As high quality social exchanges between employees and their co-workers are likely to have spill over effect on the organisation (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008), we expect that employee's trust in co-workers is positively related to co-workers directed OCB (OCBC) and organisation-directed OCB (OCBO). We hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 2: Trust in co-workers is positively related to (a) co-workers directed OCB (OCBC) and (b) organisation-directed OCB (OCBO).

Past research has noted that trust in organisation could help to lower employees' withdrawal behaviour such as absenteeism, lateness, and turnover (Beehr & Gupta, 1978). According to Ferres et. al. (2004), trust in co-workers is negatively related to intention to leave. Taken together, previous work demonstrates that trust could mitigate the occurrence of undesirable behaviour in the workplace.

Trust in senior management, according to Thau, Crossley, Bennett, and Sczesny (2007), is significantly and negatively linked to antisocial work behaviour. They suggest that CWB falls under the broader construct of antisocial work behaviour. Besides, according to the authors, employees tend to act in ways that protect their self-interests such as taking property from work without permission when there is little trust in the management.

Accordingly, we hypothesize that when employees trust their co-workers, they are less likely to engage in co-workers targeted CWB (CWBC) and organisation-targeted CWB (CWBO). This leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Trust in co-workers is negatively related to (a) co-workers targeted CWB (CWBC) and (b) organisation-targeted CWB (CWBO).

Spector and Jex's (1998) job-stress model proposes that job stressors could trigger negative emotions, and thereby may results in negative responses to the stressors. Cole, Walter, and Bruch (2008) examined the relationship between team behaviour and team performance using a sample of 61 teams in a manufacturing company. The authors report that dysfunctional behaviour in work teams is negatively related to team performance through the mediating role of teams' negative feelings such as anger and anxiety.

Jones (2009) investigated the relationship between organisational justice and counterproductive work behaviour (CWB). According to the author, desires for revenge against the organisation significantly mediate the relationship between perceived procedural injustice and organisation-targeted CWB. In addition, he finds that desires for revenge against the supervisor significantly mediate the relationship between perceived interactional injustice and supervisors-targeted CWB. According to Jones, perceived injustice motivates employees to harm the source of mistreatment because it shows that the organisation or the supervisor cares little about them. Employees thus tend to engage in CWB in response to their desire for revenge.

Using a sample of 203 employees in a property management company, Miner-Rubino and Reed (2010) indicate that trust in organisation significantly mediates the relationships between workplace incivility and employees' outcomes such as job satisfaction, job burnout, and turnover intentions. According to the authors, when employees experience rude behaviour in the workplace, they tend to lose trust in the organisation. This in turn would cause them to feel dissatisfied with their jobs and increase their intention to withdrawal from work. In addition, Jehn, Rispens, and Thatcher (2010) show that task conflict is related to negative group environment such as lower levels of trust towards other group members. This in turn may negatively affects individual's performance and satisfaction with the group.

We therefore anticipate that co-workers' social undermining behaviour is likely to diminish trust in co-workers, and thereby discourage them to perform more OCB and encourage them to engage more CWB. This leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Trust in co-workers mediates the relationships between social undermining behaviour and (a) co-workers directed OCB (OCBC), (b) organisation-directed OCB (OCBO), (c) co-workers targeted CWB (CWBC), and (d) organisation-targeted CWB (CWBO).

3. Method

3.1 Samples

A total of 596 employee and 580 co-worker questionnaires were respectively distributed in ten private organisations located in Kuala Lumpur and the state of Selangor. Of these, 502 employees and 383 co-workers returned the completed and usable questionnaires. The multi-source data were used to reduce the problem associated with common method variance.

3.2 Research measures

Co-workers' social undermining behaviour was evaluated by 13 items that were developed by Duffy et al. (2002). The internal consistency reliability of this scale in their study was .90. An example of their original co-workers' undermining items is, 'Talked bad about you behind your back.' To enable the employees to assess their co-workers, the item was rephrased as, 'My co-workers talked bad about me behind my back.' The employees responded to these items on a 7-point scale (1 = never, 7 = always).

Trust in co-workers was assessed using four-item trust scale developed by Mayer and Davis (1999). They reported an internal reliability of .69 for this scale. The participating employees responded whether they agreed or disagreed with four statements such as 'I would be comfortable giving my co-workers a task or problem which was critical to me, even if I could not monitor their actions'.

Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) was assessed using items adapted from Lee and Allen's (2002) measure of organisation-directed OCB (OCBO) and individuals directed OCB (OCBI). They reported a Cronbach's alpha of .88 for OCBO and .83 for OCBI in their original study. An example of their original OCBO items is, 'Show pride when representing the organisation in public.' To enable the supervisors to evaluate the employees' OCBO, the item was rephrased as, 'This employee shows pride when representing the organisation in public.' The OCBI items were also rephrased to enable the co-workers to evaluate the participating employees' co-workers directed OCB (OCBC). An example of the authors' original OCBI items is, 'Helps others who have been absent.' was rephrased as, 'This employee helps other co-workers who have been absent.' The items had seven response options ranging from 1 = never to 7 = always to measure how often the employees are engaged in OCBO and OCBC.

Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB) was measured using a 19-item scale by Bennett and Robinson (2000). The authors reported Cronbach's alphas of .81 and .78 for the organisational deviance and interpersonal deviance scales, respectively. In this study, the items were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = never to 7 = always. An example of Bennett and Robinson's original organisational deviance items is, 'Taken property from work without permission.' To enable the supervisors to clearly evaluate the employees' organisation-targeted CWB (CWBO), the item was rephrased as, 'This employee took property from work without permission.' An example of the authors' original interpersonal deviance item is, 'Acted rudely towards someone at work.' To allow the co-workers to clearly evaluate the employees' co-workers targeted CWB (CWBC), this item was rephrased as, 'This employee acted rudely towards other co-workers at work.'

An exploratory factor analysis of the items used to assess the variables showed that these items represented discrete scales. All items loaded on the expected factor, each with loadings greater than .40 on that factor and less than .30 on any other factor.

3.3 Data analysis strategy

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to empirically examine the relationships among the variables. A large chi-square (χ^2) value generally indicates that the model does not adequately fit the data. Models are generally accepted when their chi-square ratios (i.e., chi-square divided by degrees of freedom) are two or less (Arbuckle, 1997, as cited in Colquitt, 2001). The comparative fit index (CFI) above .900 is often associated with the desired model fit (Bentler, 1990; Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2010). In addition, lower values of the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and the standardised root mean residual (SRMR) tend to suggest a better model fit. In general, the RMSEA of less than .08 and the SRMR of below .10 are preferred (Vandenberg & Lance, 2000).

4. Results

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations for the major variables. Overall, these zero-order correlations support the model proposed. However, to test the model, we conducted a series of structural equation models. We tested the hypothesized structural model using the IBM SPSS Amos 18 program. Multiple indices of fit were calculated to assess the models (Kelloway, 1996). The hypothesized model provided a good fit to the data, χ^2 was 2321.34 with 1120 degrees of freedom, and a normed chi-square of 2.07. The CFI was .917, TLI was .913, with a SRMR of .06, and a RMSEA of .05.

Table 1: Means (M), Standard Deviations (SD), and Correlations of Major Variables (N=502).

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. SU behaviour	3.00	19.32	(.97)					
2. Trust in co-workers	5.70	2.21	-.17**	(.73)				
3. OCBC	5.75	3.97	-.08*	.49**	(.82)			
4. OCBO	4.93	4.18	-.04	.16**	.13**	(.86)		
5. CWBC	1.55	2.40	.05	-.15**	-.19**	-.06	(.81)	
6. CWBO	1.79	7.01	.05	-.14**	-.12**	-.04	.36**	(.90)

Note. Coefficients alpha are in parentheses. SU behaviour = social undermining behaviour; OCBC = co-workers directed OCB; OCBO = organisation-directed OCB; CWBC = co-workers targeted CWB; CWBO = organisation-targeted CWB.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Figure 2 shows the significance pathways for the model. As predicted in Hypotheses 1, co-workers' social undermining behaviour was found to have a significant and negative direct relationship with trust in co-workers ($\beta = -.18$, $p < .001$).

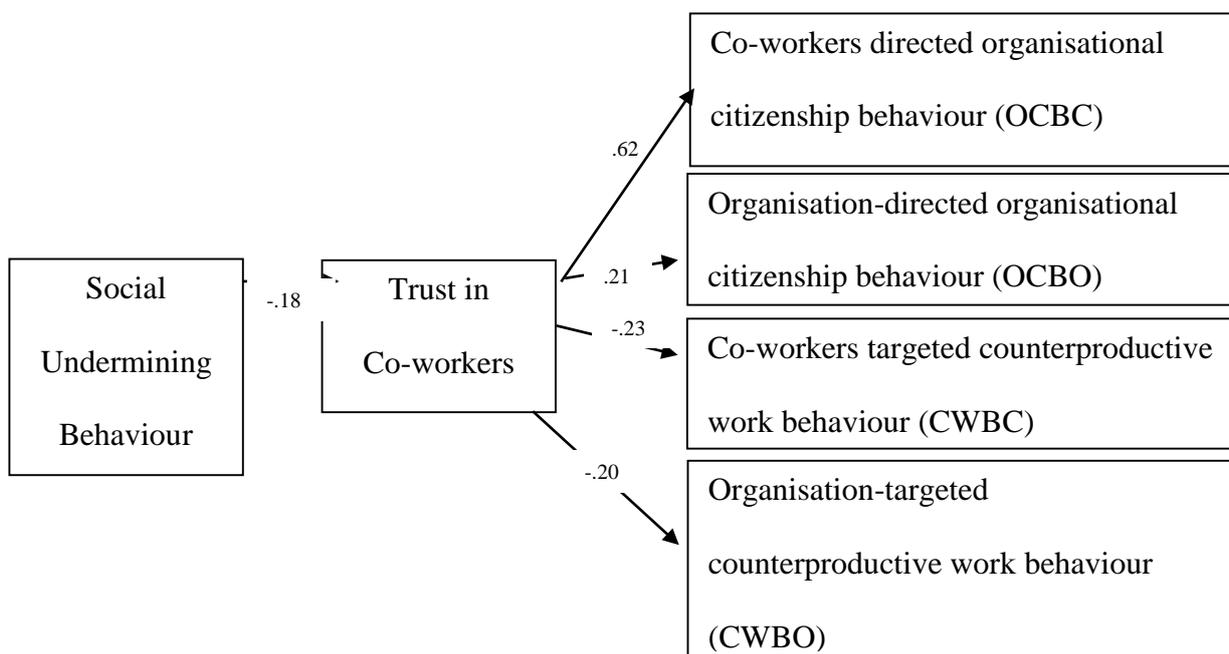


Figure 2: The final model (standardized path coefficients).

In relation to Hypotheses 2a and 2b, trust in co-workers was reported to be positively linked to employees' OCBC and OCBO, with $\beta = .62$, $p < .001$ and $\beta = .21$, $p < .001$, respectively. Hypotheses 3a and 3b was also supported as trust in co-workers was significantly related to CWBC and CWBO, with $\beta = -.23$, $p < .001$ and $\beta = -.20$, $p < .001$, respectively.

Hypotheses 4a-d were supported as trust in co-workers fully mediated the relationship between co-workers' social undermining behaviour and OCBC ($B = -.11$); between co-workers' social undermining behaviour and OCBO ($B = -.04$); between co-workers' social undermining behaviour and CWBC ($B = .04$); and between co-workers' social undermining behaviour and CWBO ($B = .04$).

5. Discussion

The results of this study revealed that co-workers' social undermining behaviour was significantly and negatively related to employees' trust in co-workers. The findings suggested that co-workers' negative behaviour would diminish trust in co-workers. Co-workers' social undermining behaviour could negatively influence the employees' social work environment. Mistreatment in the workplace, according to Barling (1996), could create the feelings of fear and distrust among one another. Cole et al. (2008) affirm that the presence of dysfunctional behaviour in a team creates team-members' negative emotional reactions such as anger and disgust. Langred (2007) reveals that relationship conflict in self-managing teams is negatively related to trust in team members. Similarly, Lau and Cobb (2010) suggest that relationship conflicts among the co-workers have a negative relationship with trust in co-workers. As interpersonal conflicts include the rude and social undermining behaviour (Ilies et al., 2011), the findings of this study tend to suggest a negative relationship between co-workers' social undermining behaviour and trust in co-workers.

The results of this study showed that trust in co-workers was related to employees' OCB, CWB, and task performance. Trust in co-workers was found significantly and positively related to both co-workers directed OCB (OCBC) and organisation-directed OCB (OCBO). These findings are consistent with the past research that supports the relationship between trust and OCB (e.g., Love & Forret, 2008; Yakovleva, Reilly, & Werko, 2010). According to Choi (2006), trust in co-workers is significantly and positively related to employees' helping behaviour (i.e., a sub-dimension of OCB). Lau and Cobb (2010) explain that trust is necessary for reciprocal exchange among the individuals at work as it would lead to more organisational citizenship behaviour. According to Konovsky and Pugh (1994), employees are likely to engage in OCB as long as they expect that their co-workers would fulfil their obligations and provide reciprocal benefits over time. This study thus extended findings of previous research by suggesting that trust in co-workers not only has a positive relationship with co-workers directed OCB (OCBC), but also with organisation-directed OCB (OCBO). The results tend to indicate that the presence of trust in co-workers would benefit the organisations and their members.

The findings of this study showed that trust in co-workers was significantly and negatively related to both co-workers targeted CWB (CWBC) and organisation-targeted CWB (CWBO). Colquitt et al.'s (2007) meta-analysis reveals that trust has a significant and negative relationship with employees' CWB. Bowler and Brass (2006) posit that employees would engage less in co-workers targeted CWB (CWBC) and organisation-targeted CWB (CWBO) when they view their co-workers favourably. When employees trust their co-workers, they would hesitate to harm their co-workers and organisations. Trust is perhaps important to build and maintain long-term social exchange relationships (Konovsky & Pugh, 1994; Settoon & Mossholder, 2002).

This study also showed that co-workers' social undermining behaviour has indirect relationships with employees' job performance. The relationships were fully mediated by trust in co-workers. These findings supported the important role of trust in co-workers in the relationships between co-workers' social undermining behaviour and employees' job performance. The findings corroborated a similar work by Robinson and Morrison (1995) who indicate that the relationship between perceived contract violation and civic virtue is mediated by trust in one's employer. They warn that a sense of unfair treatment could lead to an erosion of trust, and thereby increased the likelihood that the employees would engage in more CWB and less OCB. The results of this study are consistent with Miner-Rubino and Reed's (2010) findings that trust mediated the relationship between workplace incivility and a range of employees' work outcomes such as job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and burnout. The co-workers' social undermining behaviour could cause employees to distrust the co-workers, and distract them from focusing on performing well at work.

In summary, the findings of this study tend to suggest that the more trustworthy the co-workers were, the more employees trust them, and the more they were perceived to engage in more OCB. They were also less likely to engage in CWB. Apart from that, the results indicated that co-workers' social undermining behaviour could diminish trust in co-workers, and thereby negatively affect employees' work behaviour. Theoretical and managerial implications of this study are discussed in the following sections.

6. Conclusion

This study is probably the first to broaden the focus of social undermining behaviour research and present a scenario of how co-workers' social undermining behaviour indirectly influences employees' job performance. Duffy et. al. (2002) did not find significant relationships between co-workers' social undermining behaviour and employees' outcomes such as self-efficacy and organisational commitment. The results of this study demonstrated that trust in co-workers fully mediated the relationships between co-workers' social undermining behaviour and employees' job performance. This finding was important because it suggested that co-workers' social undermining behaviour could have indirect effects on employees' outcomes, via the mechanism of trust in co-workers.

The findings highlighted the importance of reducing social undermining behaviour in the workplace. The presence of social undermining behaviour would weaken the relationships between employees and their co-workers because they will lose trust among themselves. In addition, co-workers' social undermining behaviour could negatively affect employees' job performance. Managers should therefore take the appropriate strategies to prevent the occurrence of social undermining behaviour in the workplace by promoting trust among the employees. Preventive actions may include proactively resolving conflicts at work, communicating positive behavioural norms, encouraging employees to engage in productive activities, and eliminating unsavoury role models. Management could provide training programmes to equip managers with the necessary skills to effectively intervene and overcome social undermining behaviour in the workplace.

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