

Perception of University Students Towards Unethical Behavior at Workplace: Is There Hope?

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(Paper presentation of the *International Semlnar on Educational Management Towards Enhancing Human Capital* held on 27-29 November 2007 in Kuala Lumpur)

**PERCEPTION OF
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS
TOWARDS UNETHICAL
BEHAVIOR AT WORKPLACE:
IS THERE HOPE?**

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*International Seminar on Educational Management
'Towards Enhancing Human Capital'
27 Nov - 29 Nov, 2007.*

INTRODUCTION

Workplace ethics are an extension of the personal standards or lack of them that is inherent in the people who make up the workplace

ETHIC

1. "The body of moral principles or values governing or distinctive of a particular culture or group"
2. A complex of moral precepts held or rules of conduct followed by an individual.
3. Having ethics is doing the right or moral thing when no one is looking.
4. Personal choice

Workplace Deviant behaviour

Unethical behaviour in this paper is referred to as deviant behaviour.

Workplace deviance

1. Voluntary behaviour that violates significant organizational norms and threatens the well-being of the organization or its members, or both (Robinson & Bennett, 1995).
2. Voluntary behaviour in that employees either lack motivation to conform to, and/or become motivated to violate, normative expectations of the social context (Kaplan, 1975).

TYPES OF EMPLOYEE DEVIANCE

1. Production deviance first include various types of behaviour that a counterproductive (e.g., substandard work, slowdowns, insubordination).

2. Property deviance, the and the second category pertains to acts against property and assets of the organization (e.g., theft, pilferage, embezzlement, vandalism).

Focus of the paper.....

Past research has indicated that students who have committed deviant behaviours will have a *higher tendency* to *repeat* such behaviours when they enter *workplace* later.

This is mainly because organizations depend on individual in managerial position to prevent such behaviours.

Table 1: Transparency International Corruption Perception Index on Malaysia 1995-2004

Source: Amended from Transparency International Report 1995-2004

Year	Country Rank	Number of the country	CPI Score
1995	23	41	5.28
1996	26	54	5.32
1997	32	52	5.01
1998	29	85	5.3
1999	32	99	5.1
2000	36	90	4.8
2001	36	91	5.0
2002	33	102	4.9
2003	37	133	5.2
2004	39	146	5.0

**PREVALECE OF DEVIANT BEHAVIORS
AT THE MANGEMENT LEVEL.....**

EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTED CASES....

Cases involving ministers,

-Using position.

1. The Former Land and Co-operative Development Minister, Tan Sri Kasitah Gadam is facing charges of corruption and cheating.
2. Using his position as Sabah Land Development Board (SLDB) chairman for his financial gain by taking part in the decision to approve a proposal for the sale of 16.8 million shares held by the board in Sapi Plantations Sdn Bhd to Brismark Enterprise Sdn Bhd.
3. He was promised 3.36 million shares in Sapi Plantations.

Example of Corruption

1. The case of Enforcement Director Kapt (Rtd) Abdul Kudus Ahmad was charged in the Sessions Court with 24 counts of accepting bribes amounting to RM59 000.
2. Abdul Kudus is accused of accepting bribes on several occasions from a restaurant owner at various locations in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor.
3. The money is given to Abdul Kudus as an inducement to withdraw the notice of license cancellation and closure of business and not to take action against the restaurant owner for placing chairs and tables on the road in front of his restaurant.

Misuse of power

The case of former Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM) Managing Director Mukhtar Ramli was alleged to have committed a breach criminal trust involving RM397 000 who have committed all the while he was the managing director of the organization (Utusan Malaysia, 15 December 2005).

Misuse of power

The case of Datuk Mohd Shariff who was a former Selangor state executive councillor accused of using his position for personal benefit when he participated in the Sepang Land Office Committee

Thus..... Deviant behaviour is a cluster of acts, which one act LEADS TO to another

For example:

Former Rural Development Ministry secretary-general Datuk Dr Abdul Aziz Muhamad was found guilty by a Sessions Court of cheating and abetment in criminal breach of trust involving RM11 million relating to the hardcore poor development project (PPRT). He was sentenced to 10 years' jail.

He urged his subordinate Datuk Alwi Said to misdirect RM2 million earmarked for helping poor people in the North Eastern state of Terengganu in the farming project.

He was also found guilty of cheating Datuk Mustafa Mohamad, who was the the second finance minister, by making him believe that a proposal to invest RM9 million in the project was viable (New Straits Times, 12 November 2005). Presenting false information is another form deviant behaviour.

Having discussed the prevalence of deviant behaviour at workplace referring to the Table , the conduct of unethical behaviour is still at large despite the presence of all kinds of rules and regulations, especially when it involves workers from the top level of the organization.

It is an irony, if we compare the International Corruption Index of Malaysia vis a vis Malaysia's corporate governance. As shown in the table 2, in terms of reforming laws and rules, Malaysia is ranked the highest but in view of enforcement scored as moderate compared to other Asian countries.

Source: Amended from Malaysian Business, 16 July 2003

Table 2: Rank of Countries based on Corporate Governance

Countries	Laws and Rules	Enforcement
Singapore	8.5	7.5
Hong Kong	8.0	6.5
India	8.0	6.0
Taiwan	7.0	5.0
Korea	7.0	3.5
Malaysia	9.0	3.5
Thailand	7.5	3.0
China	5.0	4.0
Philippine	6.5	2.0
Indonesia	4.5	1.5

WHY IS THIS STUDY IMPORTANT?

• Past research has indicated that students who have committed deviant behaviours will have a *higher tendency* to *repeat* such behaviours when they enter *workplace* later. This is mainly because organizations depend on individual in managerial position to prevent such behaviours.

• Thus in order to uphold the integrity of the organization, both the present **executives** and **students in higher organization** should be viewed together in managing our future managers.

Objective of the study

the incidences of deviant behaviour and the perception of students in higher learning institutions regarding deviant behaviour at workplace, as to emphasize the need to focus on such behaviours at workplace

Method

This paper is based on a study conducted to gauge the student's tendency for involving in such deviant behaviours at workplace. This exploratory study was conducted among 1126 students from two higher learning institution that participated voluntarily in this study.

Students Perception on Deviant Behaviours

The data from 903 students were valid to be used for analysis. The sample of the study consisted of 61.7% of male and 38.1% female students. Findings indicated that on the overall the students do have a tendency to engage in various types of behaviours at workplace.

The following table shows the findings in an ascending order of the deviant behaviour that they would agree with if it occurs at workplace.

Sl. No.	Types of deviant behaviours	Yes (%)	Student Number
1.	Used illegal drug or consumed alcohol on the job	4.2	38
2.	Taking office supplies for personal gain	5.2	47
3.	Stealing office money	5.6	51
4.	Publicly embarrass someone at work.	6.8	61
5.	Falsified receipt to get reimbursed for money used for personal matters	6.9	62
6.	Behaving rudely towards someone at workplace	7.3	66
7.	Curse someone at work	7.6	69

8	Engaging in immoral behaviour in order to gain sales/promotion	8.3	75
9	Made an ethnic/racial remark joke at work	9.6	87
10	Neglecting your boss's instruction	9.7	88
11	Discussed confidential organizational matters to someone who is not supposed to know about it	12.5	113
12	Making travelling claims more than you spent	12.5	113
12	Taking credit for someone else work	13.5	122
13	Taking office property for the use of others	13.7	124
14	Littered your work environment	13.9	126

15	Make comments that hurt others feeling.	15.8	143
16	Taking office properties without permission	16.3	147
17	Purposely making jokes to friends that is over the limit	16.5	149
18	Loosing temper during work	17.3	156
19	Pnt little effort into your work	18.8	170
20	Not reporting after hbreaking office properties	20.2	182
21	Not putting equal share of work in a group assignment	22.0	199
22	Hiding the truth to cover up your mistakes	24.3	219
23	Intentionally dragged work in order to get more claims	25.5	230

24	Played a prank on someone at work	25.7	232
25	Left your work for someone else to finish	25.8	233
26	Told negative things about your workplace to someone	26.0	235
27	Intentionally worked slow to finish a job	26.6	240
28	Taking office properties for self use	27.7	250
29	Giving accuses for NOT finishing a job	29.0	262
30	Lose your temper at work	30.7	277
31	Coming to work late without permission	32.2	291

32	Leaving work early without permission	32.3	292
33	Making long distance phone calls for personal use	34.1	308
34	Calling in sick when not	35.0	316
35	Leaving the office early while the boss is not around/taking an extended work break	35.4	320
36	Intentionally hiding the truth to cover someone else mistake	35.6	322
37	Taking longer break than is acceptable	37.5	339
38	Spent more too much time fantasizing or daydreaming instead of working	38.2	345
39	Attending personal matters during office time	39.0	352

40	Posting personal packages using office facilities	41.7	377
41	Using office facilities for personal use	47.6	430
42	Better treatment for family members/close friends at workplace.	69.5	628

Based on the findings, we can assume that

The students might commit such acts intentionally in future

Such attitudes amongst students are not curbed than organizations may be facing various misbehaviours in workplace later creating a very malevolent environment.

* According to findings by Robinson and Bennett (1997) that individual engaging in one behaviour from a family, is more likely to engage in another behaviour from that family.

Implications

Thus the results of the study indicate that serious attention has to be given to these facts, as students are our future managers. Especially looking at the prevalence of incidences of deviant behaviours involving high officials are brought to open more frequently, quick measures has to be taken as not to allow the deviant behaviour to flourish at workplace.

Strategies

Educational Factors
Organizational Factors

EDUCATIONAL FACTORS

EDUCATORS RESPONSIBILITY

4 ELEMENTS OF GOOD CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT:

Building relationships
Effective rules and procedures
Effective curriculum development and instructional methods
Effective way reduce stress for optimal learning

Effective rules and procedures

- Findings showed that **designing and implementing rules and procedures** for classroom management have a profound impact on student behavior and learning.
- When students have **input into rules** and explained and discusses, they are more willing to comply –*training as a future managers*

Take time to develop or explain rules with students rather than just imposing rules on them

STUDENT BEHAVIOR POLICY

TO CREATE AN ORDERLY ENVIRONMENT WHERE STUDENTS CAN LEARN:

- Expected standards of behavior
- Learn to accept the consequences of behavior
- Provide opportunity to develop self control

CURRICULUM

"Responsibility, integrity, civility and other standards of behavior should be thought by the education specialist to be integrated into the curriculum"

EDUCATIONAL FACTORS

**CURRICULUM
METHODS OF TEACHING ETHICS**

ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS

1. Person-Organization Value

This factor refers to the degree to which personal value held by the individual are consistent with core organizational norms and values.

- Organizational norms consist of basic moral standards as well as other traditional community standards, including those prescribed by formal and informal organizational policies, rules, and procedures (Feldman, 1984). THUS.....

• The higher is such a fit or congruence, the **more likely** is a member to identify with a referent social unit and be a guided by its values and norms (Chatman, 1989; Hall & Schneider, 1972).

• Hence, the organization should **analyze the norm in their organization** that would contribute to deviant behaviour at workplace.

2. Loyalty and Duty

- This is a personal value acquired in a process of primary socialization. It represents a generalize sense of duty and obligation, namely, the belief by individuals that they are a moral obligation to exhibit loyalty in all significant social situations in which they are involved (Wiener, 1982).

- Regardless of their other values, individuals who rank high on generalized loyalty and duty would tend to identify with their organization and behave accordingly. Therefore, this variable also represents a strong contribution to the prevalence of deviant behaviour at workplace.

3. Personal Circumstances

- When an individual faces a compelling need or deprivation - material or otherwise - he or she might be more inclined to engage in deviant behaviour that may help them resolve such needs (Merton, 1938). Conversely, employees may be less inclined to misbehave when anticipating being at risk of losing membership.

- Hence the organization **should tailor the incidences and behaviours** of their workers as to nip it right on the set of the behaviours.

4. Dissatisfaction of Workers

- When individual **perceive being mistreated** by their employing organizations, the valence of self-benefiting **misbehaviour may increase** (e.g., Analoui & Kakabadse, 1992; Greenberg, 1990; Hollinger, 1986; Mangioni & Quinn, 1975).

Since, dissatisfaction of needs by an organization can in fact motivate workers to misbehave; hence the organization should evaluate and deploy some checking mechanism to have an idea of the workers satisfaction towards the organization.

5. Contextual Condition

- As we realize, that organizations differ in terms of the contextual conditions, at both the task and organization levels, as follows:

A. Build-in Opportunity

- Certain work organizations and jobs involve operations for which control is inherently difficult, for example, home delivery, operating cash registers, professional or food services, operations where cash transactions cannot be directly monitored by receipts, and inventory counts

B. Control Mechanisms

- Regardless of the inherent opportunity, control systems such as appraisal, reward and disciplinary systems, or special monitoring arrangements, in some organizations, are more effective at controlling behaviour than in others. Both oppressive and lax controls may contribute to the emergence of misbehaviour at workplace (Hegarty & Sims, 1979).

C. Organizational Culture

"Organizational culture" may constitute an important influence on deviant behaviour. Thus organizational culture variables can contribute to the unethical decision behaviour of managers, whereby the organization should always on the lookout so not to develop norms that tolerant towards deviant behaviour.

D. Cohesiveness

- Since in very cohesive social units the pressures to adhere to norms of conduct are especially high (Janis, 1982), this factor may be similar to organizational culture in its effects on misbehaviour. It may, indeed, be more powerful.

CONCLUSION

Since ethics and values can be taught, thus both the education specialist and the management have to joint hand to overcome deviant behaviours even before students joint the workforce

The importance of combating deviant behaviour at workplace almost important as it has direct consequences not only to the individual and the performance of the organization but also can effect the image of the country.