

## Personality and Motivational Traits As Correlates of Workplace Deviance among Public and Private Sector Employees

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**ABSTRACT** Deviant behaviors have far reaching effect on the individual and at the organizational level. In spite of clear ethical guidelines, employees indulge in deviant activities. Dispositional variables have been linked with deviant behavior and are also influenced by individual motivation; hence personality and motivational traits were considered. The purpose of the research was to study the Big Five personality traits and motivational traits to explore its relation with workplace deviance among the employees of public and private sector organizations (N = 60). The results showed that public sector employees' significantly differed from the employees of private sector on workplace deviance and openness trait of big five personality traits. Significant correlations among some of the dimensions of personality, motivational traits and workplace deviance were obtained. Neuroticism evolved as a major correlate of organizational deviance in both public and private sectors. Motivational traits (BIS, BAS) were correlated significantly to different dimensions of workplace deviance in private sector and not in public sector. It has implications for organizations on how to manage workplace deviance.

### INTRODUCTION

There has been drastic increase in number of corporate scandals such as 3G telecom scam, Commonwealth scam, etc. and deviancies caused by troubled interpersonal issues leading to death and killings, such as in the case of Maruti Suzuki Ltd., Graziano Transmissions India etc. There is an immense need to explore the underlying causes of such organizational and interpersonal deviant behaviors. Role of personality traits and motivational traits were hypothesized as correlates of workplace deviant behaviors. Hence, the purpose was sorted and the objectives were laid.

Workplace deviance is one of the most serious problems faced by organizations today. Recent media focus on acts of workplace delinquency, aggression, and violence has rejuvenated interest in the area of deviant work behaviors (Bennett and Robinson 2000). Workplace deviance is a pervasive problem, causing a huge financial loss (Greenberg 1997; Murphy 1993; Vardi and Weitz 2004). Also, the employees who are targets of workplace deviance are more likely to quit, have stress-related problems, decreased productivity, low morale, lost work time (O'Leary-Kelly et al. 1996), damaged self-esteem, increased fear and insecurity at work, and psychological and physical pain (Griffin et al. 1998). In conceptualizing workplace

deviance, there is a co existence of multiple concepts. Initially, it was interchangeably used and defined as negative workplace behavior has been referred to as antisocial behavior (Robinson and Greenberg 1998), organizational misbehavior (Vardi and Wiener 1996), non-compliant behavior (Puffer 1987), counterproductive workplace behavior (Fox and Spector 1999), negative citizenship behavior (Fisher and Locke 1992), delinquency (Hogan and Hogan 1989), tyranny (Ashforth 1994) workplace deviance (Robinson and Greenberg 1998) and dysfunctional workplace behavior (Griffin et al. 1998) to name a few.

Interpersonal and organizational deviances are two forms of workplace deviance that are directed differently but equally harmful to the organization. Interpersonal deviance can occur when the employees interact for professional or personal reasons with the co-workers or other employees at the workplace (Pulich and Tourigny 2004). Thus, the employees feel the need to misbehave either to benefit from it or make the best use of the time. Organizational Deviance is referred to as deviant behaviors that employees show and are typically aimed at the organization directly (Pulich and Tourigny 2004). Robinson and Greenberg (1998) opined that "current conceptualizations of workplace deviance are static in nature". They suggested that the literature on workplace deviance can

be advanced theoretically and empirically by studying dynamic processes. For this, person centric approach was hypothesized to have effect on deviant behavior. Deviant behaviors may also negatively affect the well-being of employees as targeted by such behaviors and one of the most serious problems faced by organizations today. For these reasons, understanding the deviant behavior in kinds of organizations with different set up and management needs further study.

Employee personality is hypothesized to contribute to the workplace deviance after controlling the demographics (Diefendroff and Mehta 2007). The perspective used is the person-based explanations to understand the varying intensity to be deviant. A meta-analytical study by Judge et al. (2008) considered the effects of the five-factor model and studied the big five traits on the various work outcomes, counterproductive and deviant behaviors. It reported essential links between big five and workplace deviance. Therefore, trait adjective approach is applied based on the Big Five model, which comprises of neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience (McCrae and Costa 1987; McCrae and John 1992).

Research on work motivation has begun to refocus on the role of traits in motivated behavior (Austin and Klein 1996; Vandewalle et al. 1999; Kanfer and Ackerman 2000). The motivational system approach is the full fledged developed model offered by Gray (1981, 1982), in which two conceptual systems are proposed, a behavioral activation system (BAS) and behavioral inhibition system (BIS). These traits are central to the wide variety of human activities and experiences. Gray further explained BAS and BIS as a general neurobiological sensitivity to positive (that is, reward) or negative (that is, punishment) to stimuli (present or imagined) that is accompanied by perceptual vigilance for an affective reactivity and a behavioral predisposition towards such stimuli. Few studies have empirically examined the link between motivational traits and workplace deviance (Marcus and Schuler 2004; Diefendroff and Mehta 2007).

In the past, a number of Indian studies have been done on personality traits in relation with factors affecting performance of the individuals (Suresh and Kadiravan 2007; Gupta 2008; Hemlatha 2008; Tyagi 2008; Subramaniam and Vinothkumar 2009). These studies covered up

various contexts; studied as explanatory behaviors with different terminologies, such as low performance, poor self skills, misconduct behaviors etc. Also, it is the need of hour where there is witnessed increase in number of corporate scams and rise in corporate frauds. All these are clearly unethical behaviors and are shockingly deviant; there is an emergent need to explore the underlying relations of such behaviors. Therefore, the purpose was to study the personality and motivational traits and to see their relation with workplace deviance among the employees of public and private sector organizations.

Based on this review following hypotheses were formulated:

1. The employees of public and private sector employees would differ on the measures of personality traits (neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness), motivational traits (behavioral inhibition and behavioral activation) and workplace deviance (interpersonal and organizational deviance).
2. Personality and motivational traits would be the significant correlates of workplace deviance.

## METHODS

### Sample

Total 60 male engineers were purposely selected from public and private sector organizations, IT department in Delhi/ NCR (N= 30 each). Minimum qualification was B. Tech degree and with at least 3 years work experience of all the participants. Gender was controlled due to availability of sample and tendency of males to engage in aggressive/violent behavior (Baron and Geddes 1999).

### Measures

Workplace deviance was assessed by a five point rating scale developed by Bennett and Robinson (2000), having two dimensions (that is, organizational and interpersonal). The organizational deviance dimension consists of 12 items and 7 items were used for interpersonal deviance with overall reliability of 0.86.

A 60 item self administered Neo Five-Factor Inventory (Neo-FFI) developed by Costa and McC

Crae (1992), for measuring personality traits (N, E, O, A, C) on a 5 point rating scale, was used. It is a reliable scale reporting correlations of 0.77- 0.92 with the NEO PI- R domain and internal consistency values ranging from 0.68-0.86.

Carver and White 1994, BAI scales measures two general motivational systems (behavioral inhibition system, BIS and behavioral activation system, BAS), yields four scale scores, one BIS score and three BAS scores. BIS/BAS scales together are measured with 20 item questionnaire on a 4 point likert scale with reliability coefficient ranging 0.71 to 0.81.

## RESULTS

The aim of the study was to explore whether the two types of organizations (public and private) differ from each other on personality and motivational traits and to see their relation with workplace deviance. The results are reported in Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 represents mean, standard deviation, standard error of mean and the t-values on the workplace deviance dimensions: Organizational Deviance (OD) and Interpersonal Deviance (ID), personality traits: Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Openness (O), Agreeableness (A) and Conscientiousness (C); and motivational traits: Behavioral Inhibition System (BIS), Behavioral Activation System (BAS), BAS Reward Responsiveness (BASRR), BAS Drive (BASD) and BAS Fun Seeking (BASFS).

The analyses of data yielded significant group differences in public and private sector employees. It was observed that mean scores of private sector employees on Organizational Deviance (OD) and Interpersonal Deviance (ID) was significantly greater than public sector ones ( $p < 0.01$ ), while mean scores of public sector employees were greater than their counterparts on the personality trait of openness only ( $p < 0.01$ ). No significant difference was obtained on motivational traits of employees of public and private sector organizations. However, public sector employees, compared with private sector employees were high on BASD ( $M = 9.63$ ,  $M = 9.00$ ), BASFS ( $M = 9.36$ ,  $M = 8.60$ ), BASRR ( $M = 8.83$ ,  $M = 8.30$ ) and slightly low on BIS ( $M = 15.06$ ,  $M = 15.40$ ) as can be seen from the mean scores.

Table 2 summarizes the correlation values of both the groups. It represents correlation values between different dimensions of personality traits (N, E, O, A, C) and motivational traits (BIS and BAS) and workplace deviance (organizational and interpersonal deviance) in public sector and private sector organizations. The results are discussed at four levels: obtained significant correlation of personality traits and motivational traits with workplace deviance, other linkages within the personality construct; then with the motivation construct and lastly of all the constructs with each other.

The correlation Table 2 revealed many significant relationships among the constructs varying in public and private sector. Neuroticism

**Table 1: Mean, S.D, SEM and t-values of public and private sector employees on the dimensions of workplace deviance, personality and motivational traits**

Organization Measures	Public sector (N=30)			Private sector (N=30)			t-values
	Mean	S.D	SEM	Mean	S.D	SEM	
<i>Workplace Deviance</i>							
OD	18.73	3.31	0.60	22.13	6.44	1.18	2.56**
ID	9.36	2.93	0.53	13.40	5.97	1.09	3.32**
<i>Personality Traits</i>							
N	23.6	4.68	0.85	24.76	4.43	0.81	0.99
E	23.33	2.73	0.50	24.40	3.32	0.61	1.35
O	26.20	2.34	0.42	23.56	3.26	0.60	3.59**
A	25.00	3.53	0.64	23.20	3.96	0.72	1.85
C	26.70	3.94	0.72	27.53	3.53	0.64	0.86
<i>Motivational Traits</i>							
BIS	15.06	2.54	0.46	15.40	4.06	0.74	0.30
BASD	9.63	1.44	0.26	9.00	2.99	0.55	1.40
BASFS	9.36	1.56	0.28	8.60	2.25	0.41	1.53
BASRR	8.83	1.78	0.32	8.30	2.13	0.39	1.05

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ;  $df = 58$

**Table 2: Coefficient of correlations on the dimensions of workplace deviance, personality and motivational traits in public and private sector employees (N = 30)**

Variable dimensions	OD	ID	N	E	O	A	C	BIS	BASD	BASFS	BASRR
OD	<b>1</b>	.49**	.58**	.055	-.004	.039	.056	.416*	-.00	-.08	.08
ID	<b>-.123</b>	<b>1</b>	.23	.315*	.165	-.168	-.104	.523**	.42**	.41*	.40*
N	<b>.411*</b>	<b>.033</b>	<b>1</b>	.361*	-.119	.073	.028	.506**	-.14	-.05	.03
E	<b>-.140</b>	<b>.186</b>	<b>.09</b>	<b>1</b>	.026	.135	-.127	.347*	.11	.05	.17
O	<b>-.209</b>	<b>-.219</b>	<b>.06</b>	<b>.285</b>	<b>1</b>	.154	.197	.154	.152	.30	.01
A	<b>-.130</b>	<b>-.248</b>	<b>-.16</b>	<b>.210</b>	<b>.131</b>	<b>1</b>	.110	.256	-.288	-.01	.01
C	<b>-.047</b>	<b>-.016</b>	<b>.38*</b>	<b>-.166</b>	<b>.023</b>	<b>-.059</b>	<b>1</b>	.280	-.298	-.14	-.35*
BIS	<b>-.017</b>	<b>-.177</b>	<b>.15</b>	<b>-.166</b>	<b>.306*</b>	<b>.102</b>	<b>-.029</b>	<b>1</b>	.008	.14	.26
BASD	<b>-.056</b>	<b>.107</b>	<b>-.37*</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>-.264</b>	<b>-.054</b>	<b>-.275</b>	<b>-.441*</b>	<b>1</b>	.54**	.33*
BASFS	<b>.055</b>	<b>.168</b>	<b>-.10</b>	<b>.038</b>	<b>-.131</b>	<b>-.193</b>	<b>-.161</b>	<b>-.174</b>	<b>.332*</b>	<b>1</b>	.51**
BASRR	<b>.277</b>	<b>.012</b>	<b>.31*</b>	<b>-.027</b>	<b>-.166</b>	<b>-.162</b>	<b>-.055</b>	<b>.276</b>	<b>.276</b>	<b>.40*</b>	<b>1</b>

Lower left (bold figures) represents correlation scores for public sector and upper right represents scores for private sector employees. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

emerged as significantly related with organizational deviance in both public and private sector organizations, “ $r(30) = 0.411, p < .05$  and  $r(30) = 0.582, p < .01$ ”, respectively, that is high neurotic person will also be highly organizationally deviant. Since, neuroticism has come up as a major correlate among both public and private sector employees, it was also explored that 41% to 58% of the construct (workplace deviance) is explained by the personality trait, neuroticism ( $R^2 = .41$  (public sector);  $R^2 = .58$  (private sector), which is a main observation that can be used with future implications in the research to make it more impactful with larger sample.

Among the big five personality traits (N, E, O, A, C), in public sector, only conscientiousness was significantly correlated with neuroticism ( $p < 0.05$ ). And the employees of private sector the following big five scores were found significant, conscientiousness with extraversion, extraversion (E) with neuroticism ( $P < 0.05$ ) and also Extraversion was significantly correlated with interpersonal deviance ( $P < .05$ ).

The motivational traits, Behavioral Inhibition (BIS) was significantly related with organizational deviance ( $p < .05$ ) and interpersonal deviance ( $P < .01$ ) in private sector and Behavioral Activation (BAS), all sub dimensions ( $P < .05$ ) was also significantly co related with interpersonal deviance. The few significant co-relationship were found within the construct of motivational traits, BIS was significantly related with its sub construct items, BASD with BASFS ( $p < .01$ ), BASFS with BASRR (Reward Responsiveness) in both private and public sector; in the public sector, the BIS was negatively re-

lated with BASD whereas it positive with BASFS ( $P < .05$ ).

There were also obtained other significant findings, which were not hypothesized but are essential to consider for whole some understanding, as mentioned, among dimensions of personality traits and motivational traits. In public sector significant relations were among Neuroticism and BASD ( $p < .05$ ), BASD and BIS, Openness and BIS ( $p < .05$ ). In private sector organizations, Neuroticism was significantly correlated with BIS ( $p < .01$ ), Extraversion (E) with BIS ( $P < .05$ ); Conscientiousness and BASRR ( $p < .05$ ) were also significantly related. In the private sector organizations, interpersonal deviance and organizational deviance were significantly correlated. These results are highly significant and provides good base for further research. These results are discussed in the light of existing literature and with a critic aspect as well.

## DISCUSSION

Findings from the results are discussed in the light of previous researches. Behavior is considered deviant when an “organization’s customs, policies, or internal regulations are violated by an individual or a group that may jeopardize the well-being of the organization or its citizens” (Robinson and Bennett 1995). Since the work culture in public sector and private sector is different and structure is formulated differently, probability of difference was expected and observed as well. It was seen that interpersonal deviance was higher in private sector than in public sector organizations. The

reasons for such behaviors have been linked with variables such as high stress levels, feelings of powerlessness, arbitrary and unjust actions by the managers, and antagonist labor relations (Bennett 1998; Bies and Tripp 1998; Greenberg and Alge 1998; Mack Shanon et al. 1998).

Personality traits and motivational traits are linked differently in public and private sector organizations. It was observed only on the openness trait among the big five employees differ with public sector employees being on the higher side, the probable reasons can be due to the differing work environments. Also Boyne (2002) realized the need for more statistical evidence, because facts like public organizations are more bureaucratic, public managers are less materialistic and have weaker organizational commitment than their private sector counterparts are narrow view of distinctiveness also inferring the need for testing more related variables.

In an descriptive study of emotional intelligence and deviant behaviors (Yunus et al. 2012), a point of contradiction where the inclusion demographics, age and gender factor was not of significant difference is indeed very intriguing, whereas the authors mentioned government sector organization have stringent role procedures, disciplinary and exercise heavy authority leaving poor scope of deviance, deviance being in low among public sector employees in our study as well. A lot ignored part which was mentioned in a study (Chirasha and Mahapa 2012), that the role of organization is of chief importance especially in imparting training and in maintenance of high ethics and transcending the values and to emphasize more on maintaining healthy work environment whereas our research presented an within individual aspect.

Conceptually, behavioral inhibition system (BIS) is related to negative affect and behavioral activation system (BAS) is related to positive affect, sensation seeking, a strong drive to attain goals impulsivity and experience of positive emotion. The increase arousal and may excite an individual to indulge in outward activity. Individuals had sensitivity towards these traits but did not significantly differ. The intrinsic motivational traits were studied considering findings with those of Jurkiewicz et al. (1998) that external rewards were not sufficient to be related with work motivation and performance, so they are intrinsically driven, hence motivational traits were studied for understand-

ing difference in individual selection in the public and private sector organizations.

The trait adjective approach adds to trace the structure underlying deviant work behaviors. Neuroticism was related positively significantly with organizational deviance, that is, high neurotic person will also be highly organizationally deviant. The study found consistent results with (Colbert et al. 2004; Judge et al. 2008) reported that neuroticism was positively and significantly related with workplace deviance, our results confined with these studies in both public and private sector organizations. Neubert (2004), found that being absent from work or working as teams are correlates of personality that directly affect whether one will succeed in the workplace, and they are strongly related with big five and not cognitive ability. The results indicated that agreeableness and conscientiousness is negatively related with workplace deviance in both the sectors. The results have been found consistent with the part of (Liao et al. 2004) study which studied the big five personality traits and its contrast with workplace deviance. Another trait study (Farhadi et al. 2012), explored that agreeableness and conscientiousness, were negatively related with workplace deviance, an interesting finding in our study were also related negatively, although not significantly to workplace deviance, except for in private sector, with organizational deviation dimension. And this study also highlighted the significant age difference which was not considered in our study.

On the measure of motivational traits BIS and BAS in public and private sector employees. A persistent pattern on this behavior dimension was observed in public sector organization. Also, Marcus and Schuler (2004) used a composite measure of motivational traits and found that no unique relation exists with workplace deviance. Whereas among employees of private sector organization, motivational traits was obtained as a significant co-relate of workplace deviance. BIS and organizational deviance was significantly co-related. Individuals, who demonstrate elevated levels of BIS activation are more inclined to avoid risky, distressing, or upsetting events, purported to reflect a response to chronic over-arousal (Carver and White 1994). BIS was also significantly correlated with interpersonal deviance, the result is generically consistent with the finding of (Diefendorff and

Mehta 2007) also contended the relationship among BIS and deviance in the workplace. In order to cope with the negative effect, individuals tend to engage in either retaliatory behavior or withdraw their effort, both of which deviates from the standards and policies of the workplace (Spector and Fox 2005). The situational variables (such as limited resources, interruptions, or restrictive rules) can also be considered as promoting deviant behaviors. Further explanation for the role of motivational traits in being related with deviant activities is supported by studies by (Gray and McNaughton 2000) explains the activation of BIS, underpins responses to any form of conflict, that is, the system facilitates the detection and resolution of conflict. In particular, in response to conflict, ongoing behaviors, underpinned by the behavioral activation or fight-flight-freezing systems, are inhibited. Instead, attention and effort is directed towards the source of this conflict.

The other explored linkages are very influential as well, it was obtained that organizational and interpersonal deviances were correlated, found consistent (Dalal 2005; Berry et al. 2007). The dimensions of BAS (Behavioral Activation System) have emerged as correlated dimensions to each other and neuroticism, inclined towards negative affectivity (Aquino et al. 1999; Fox et al. 2001). Considering the other findings clear links are explored among BAS/BIS and were also verified in these studies (Vardi and Wiener 1996; Cullen and Sackett 2003).

### CONCLUSION

Workplace deviance as a construct has major implications for employees as well as for the organizations. The present research explored workplace deviance in the context of personality and motivational traits among public and private sector employees. The results revealed that the employees of public and private organizations differed significantly on the workplace deviance (organizational and interpersonal deviance) as well as openness dimension of personality. As we are aware that public and private organizations differ in terms of work setting, company policy and procedures, resource availability, work culture and climate etc. therefore they have contributed differently to workplace deviance in the present results. It was also found that neuroticism was highly correlated

with workplace deviance in both the organizations. The coefficient of determination, in case of neuroticism, ( $R^2$ ) ranged from .41 to .58 indicating that 41% and 58% of workplace deviance (organizational and interpersonal deviance) could be attributed to neuroticism in public and private sector organizations respectively. Further, motivational traits were related with workplace deviance (organizational and interpersonal deviance) in private sector but not in public sector. Neuroticism was strongly correlated with workplace deviance, and there were definite links found among personality traits, motivational traits and workplace deviance. The findings can be used for further research purposes and to assess the utility of employee performance overall.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

As mentioned in the beginning that workplace deviance has huge financial implications, therefore the study aimed to explore the correlates of it. The company policies and procedures have definite bearing on workplace deviance therefore, organizations must be transparent while managing human beings at work. Personality trait, neuroticism explained more than 40% variance in it, therefore at the time of hiring employees, personality profile of employees should be carefully examined. The implications are different for public and private organizations; therefore a simple prescription is not possible. Workplace deviance is a matter of concern in terms of individual and organizational health and must be carefully examined and explored. Further research can be carried out with larger sample with consideration of within organizational factors, so that holistic approach can be used in understanding causes of such deviant behaviors.

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