

Research Paper

## Job Stress and Self-Esteem as A Predictor of Workplace Deviant Behavior

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to understand the relationship between job stress, organization-based self-esteem, and workplace deviant behavior. Also, it investigates the mediating role of organization-based self-esteem for the relationship between job stress and workplace deviant behavior. A survey was conducted on 210 employees in the age range of 21 to 54 pertaining to both, public and private sector in various industries in India. The research hypothesis was tested using Baron and Kenny's (1986) method of mediation in SPSS Version 28. Findings showed that workplace deviant behavior is positively affected by job stress whereas organization-based self-esteem affects it negatively. Results of regression analysis revealed that organization-based self-esteem is a mediator between job stress and workplace deviant behavior. Hence, increase in job stress leads to decrease in organization-based self-esteem which may result in increase in workplace deviant behavior. Furthermore, future research can analyse the various dimensions of workplace deviant behavior in depth to gain a deeper knowledge with respect to job stress and organization-based self-esteem.

**Keywords:** Job Stress, Occupational Stress, Organization-Based Self-Esteem, Self-Esteem, Workplace Deviant Behavior, Counterproductive Behavior

### Workplace Deviant Behavior

Workplace Deviant Behavior (Aquino and Thau, 2009) are those behavior or the actions that are performed deliberately by some employees in order to violate organizational norms, policies, and ethical standards. Organisations throughout the world are becoming increasingly concerned about their employees acting in ways that are not acceptable or expected in the workplace. Workplace deviance can spread like a virus, eroding the organization's essential values. As a result, such behavior is discretionary (Bennett and Robinson, 2000) and can be destructive or might cause harm to the organisation and its members (Fox and Spector, 2005; Bennett & Robinson, 2003). It is an occupational crime and can result in legal implications for the individual who engages in the behaviour (Peterson, 2002). Businesses run the danger of losing millions of dollars as a result of employee theft and sabotage. People who are the targets of such abnormal behaviour at work are likely to suffer a variety of unfavourable consequences, including

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being forced to resign, having their productivity and morale reduced, and losing out on work hours (O’Leary-Kell et al, 1996).

Two categories of workplace deviance were postulated namely Organizational and Interpersonal (Bennett and Robinson, 2000). The Organisational deviance (OD) refers to the deviant behaviours directed at the organisation (property and production deviances), such as tardiness, stealing, sabotage, or exerting minimal endeavours. Whereas Interpersonal deviance (ID) are the acts directed towards individuals in the workplace such as colleagues, managers, and employees under their supervision. It includes behaviours that are categorized further into two divisions namely political deviance such as backbiting, accusing others, or biasing and personal aggression such as pushing, name-calling, insults, deliberately ignoring, or harassing (Saul Fine et al, 2010; Bennett and Robinson, 2000). Such frequent occurrence of unconventional or inappropriate workplace behaviour is raising serious concerns among enterprises worldwide (Simon Lloyd D. Restubog et al, 2010).

Different types of deviant behaviour can have a wide range of harmful outcomes (Appelbaum et al, 2007). Deviant workplace behaviour has a detrimental impact on the general well-being of the firm and can lead to a decline in performance (Resick et al., 2013; Tuna et al., 2016). It also impacts the substantial economic growth of the organisation (Bennett and Robinson, 2000). Workplace deviance can have serious implications such as High manufacturing costs, variable service quality and price, a bad service reputation, and lost sales and earnings (Biron, 2010; Nasir and Bashir, 2012). It may also weaken employee trust, decrease job satisfaction, and elevate the risk of turnover besides physical and mental health problems (Nielsen and Knardahl, 2015). Furthermore, it might risk an organization's reputation as well as its relationships with clients, partners, and other stakeholders. It can also have major consequences for productivity, decision-making, and financial expenses at all organisational levels (Appelbaum et al., 2007). Therefore, to prevent organizations and society at large from such harmful outcomes, it is crucial to focus on reducing and managing the antecedents that are causing deviant behavior at workplaces. Job Stress (Omar, Halim, Zainah, Farhadi, Nasir & Kairudin, 2011; Spector & Fox, 2005) and Organization-based Self-Esteem (Orth et al., 2010; Twenge & Campbell, 2009) are correlated to workplace deviant behavior.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### ***Job Stress and Workplace Deviant Behavior***

The causes that contribute to workplace deviation are numerous and include individual, societal, organisational, and economic factors. Only a few examples include personality, education, group influence, ethical work climate, frustration, and stress. There isn’t much research that discuss how job stress affects workplace deviance outside of the setting of western society (Boekhorst, 2015). Hence it brings us to our primary objective to determine how job stress affects workplace deviant behaviour in Indian firms. Work-related stress or the stress caused when one’s job is not done, is referred to as occupational stress (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983; Spector & Fox, 2005; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Swimberghe et al., 2014). Stress is characterized by physical or physiological response (Harms et al., 2017) that causes mental, physical, or emotional pressure. When an individual's ability to execute professional responsibilities is not aligned with the expectations of the work environment, occupational stress develops (Henry & Evans, 2008; Peterson 2002; Beehr 1976). The deviant behavior that can also be induced by a stressful environment or factor in order to release their frustration (De Clercq et al., 2019). It not only

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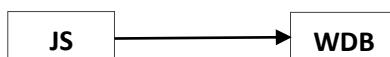
targets the organization (Chiu et al., 2015; Bennett and Robinson, 2000) but also the well-being of the members (Everton et al., 2007).

Job Stress has a lot of detrimental consequences on an organisation and its employees (Chen and Spector, 1992). Many researchers discovered that today's workplace is characterised by frequent job switching, unmanageable heavy workloads, new technologies, higher job expectations, job insecurity, ongoing organisational downsizing efforts, and increased uncertainty, all of which are contributing to an increase in workplace stress (Belal, 2009). When employees are unable to handle these demanding circumstances and demands, occupational stress poses a health danger (Hellgren, Sverke, & Isaksson, 1999). Role conflict and ambiguity are typical workplace stressor scenarios (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964).

A study was conducted (Omar, Halim, Zainah, Farhadi, Nasir & Kairudin, 2011) where data was gathered from 162 participants working as civil servants in various sectors. Results showed that there is a significant positive relation between occupational stress and workplace deviance. The individuals who encounter job stress are more prone to engage in deviant behaviors in the workplace. According to the model of workplace deviance, perceived stressors in the workplace can lead to emotional reactions and as a result induce deviant behaviours in the organization (Spector & Fox, 2005). Building on these findings, we develop our first hypotheses. (Refer figure 1)

**Hypotheses 1:** Job Stress is positively related to workplace deviant behavior.

Figure 1:



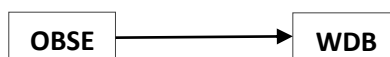
### ***Organization-Based Self-Esteem and Workplace Deviant Behavior***

A personal and subjective assessment of one's sense of value or standing within a group or community can be referred to as Self-Esteem. It is a "marker" that a person uses internally to show how involved or valued they feel in their social context. (Leary, 1990). Self-esteem is a subjective measure of a person's perceived worth or sense of belonging within a group. Low self-esteem has been linked to many unfavourable outcomes, including aggressive behaviour, hostility, and counterproductive actions in the workplace, all of which can be categorised as types of deviant behaviour in the workplace (Orth et al., 2010; Twenge & Campbell, 2009). Individuals who experience a diminished self-esteem may act in such deviant ways that worsen the cause of their lowered self-esteem because such actions reassert their self-concept and display a sense of authority over the situation (Baumeister et al.; Miller, 2001; Tedeschi, 2001). In congruence to the ideas mentioned above, research was conducted in the field of organizational sciences (Ferris et al. and Thau & Mitchell). It revealed that employees having a decreased sense of self due to the negative work experiences tend to engage in deviant work behaviors. Self-esteem can either have a major impact on deviant behaviour or can help to temper potentially adverse reactions to environmental stressors (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996). Therefore Organization-Based Self-Esteem may intervene the influence of environmental stressors on workplace deviant behavior. This results in the making of our second hypotheses. (See figure 2)

**Hypotheses 2:** OBSE is negatively related to workplace deviant behavior.

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Figure 2:

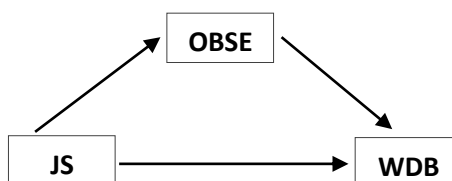


### *Job Stress, Organization-Based Self-Esteem, and Workplace Deviant Behavior*

The relationship between self-esteem and deviant behavior is seen in much research. However, the interrelationships between job stress, OBSE and WDB have not been studied much. Only a handful of studies have shown the relationship between job stress and OBSE. Out of which one research has revealed that goal-striving stress is linked to lower levels of self-esteem (Neighbours et al. 2011, Sellers and Neighbours 2008). Therefore, this study aimed to investigate whether mediating role of OBSE could weaken the impact of job stress on workplace deviant behavior. (Refer figure 3)

**Hypotheses 3:** OBSE plays a mediating role between job stress and workplace deviant behavior.

Figure 3:



### *Objectives of the Study*

- To examine the relationship between Job Stress and Workplace Deviant Behaviour.
- To examine the relationship between Organization-based Self-Esteem (OBSE) and Workplace Deviant Behaviour.
- To investigate the mediating role of Organization-Based Self-Esteem between Job Stress and Workplace Deviant Behavior.

### *Sample and Data Collection*

A total sample of 210 employees in the age range of 21 to 54 was collected via google forms. Amongst which 106 were females and 104 were males. Survey questions were distributed to 240 employees and a total of 215 were returned. 5 were removed as they were invalid therefore a total of 210 responses (87.5% response rate) were received. The sample featured almost 1:1 ratio of male and female with the total mean age and standard deviation of 27.43 and 6.184 respectively. A majority of 190 (90.47%) individuals were working in private sector whereas a minority of 20 (9.5%) individuals were working in public sector.

### *Measures*

There are 3 tools considered in this study. Workplace Deviant Behavior construct is measured using Bennett and Robinson's scale (2000) with 19 items in total. Out of which, 12 items measure organizational deviance whereas 7 items measure interpersonal deviance. Respondents were asked to rate how much they were engaging in each of the behaviours. The 7-point Likert scale is used ranging from 1 (Never) to 7 (Daily)

Perceived Stress Scale (10 items) by Sheldon Cohen and Gail M. Williamson (1988) is used to measure Job Stress/Occupational Stress. It is the most used psychological tool for evaluating stress and evaluates how stressful situations in a person's life are perceived by them. The test includes direct questions concerning an individual's current degree of

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perceived stress as well as items that probe how unpredictable, unmanageable, and overloaded their life feels. The scale's scoring is as follows; 0 (Never), 1 (Almost Never), 2 (Sometimes), 3 (Fairly Often), 4 (Very often). The item numbers 4,5,7 and 8 have negative scoring with values 4 (Never) to 0 (Very Often).

Organization Based Self-Esteem Scale (OBSE) developed by Jon L. Pierce et al is used to measure Organization Based Self-Esteem with scoring 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The OBSE was created to assess a person's overall feeling of worth as it relates to their affiliation with their organisation. All the three scales marked high reliability ( $\alpha \geq 0.91$ ).

### ANALYSIS AND RESULT

Table 1 presents means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlations for the measures of Workplace deviant behavior, Job stress and Self-esteem. The correlations show that workplace deviant behavior is positively correlated to job stress (.164,  $p < 0.005$ ) and negatively correlated to organization-based self-esteem (.189,  $p < 0.001$ ) supporting hypotheses 1 and 2.

**Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlations of the three variables.**

	M	SD	1	2	3
1 Job Stress	18.40	6.037	---	---	---
2 Organization-Based Self-Esteem	36.68	9.320	-0.290**	---	---
3 Workplace Deviant Behavior	29.80	12.622	0.164*	-.189**	---

\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ ; M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation

Table 2 shows the standardized regression. Based on table 2, it was revealed that job stress significantly predicted workplace deviant behavior ( $\beta = .164$ ,  $p < .018$ ). It also showed that organization-based self-esteem significantly predicted workplace deviant behavior ( $\beta = .189$ ,  $p < .006$ ).

Using the Baron and Kenney's (1986) approach, path coefficients were initially evaluated. The path coefficient from job stress to workplace deviant behavior dropped substantially and become statistically insignificant when organization-based self-esteem entered to the model ( $\beta$  decreased from .164 to .119), which is consistent with Baron and Kenney's (1986) criteria for full mediation. Hence Organization-based Self-esteem is suggested as a mediator of the relationship between job stress and workplace deviant behavior thus supporting hypotheses 3.

**Table 2: Standardized regression weights of the full latent model using Baron and Kenny's (1986) method.**

	B	R <sup>2</sup>	t	P	S.E.
1 JS → WDB	.164	.027	2.393	.018	.143
2 JS → OBSE	-.290	.084	-4.370	.001	.102
3 OBSE → WDB	-.189	.036	2.393	.018	.143
4 JS → WDB (Direct Path)	.119	.027	1.679	.095	.148
5 OBSE → WDB (Indirect Path)	-.154	.049	-2.177	.031	.096

JS: Job Stress; OBSE: Organization-Based Self-Esteem; WDB: Workplace Deviant Behavior

Note: In Model 1, Independent Variable (IV) = JS; Dependent Variable (DV) = WDB. In Model 2, IV = JS; DV=OBSE. In Model 3, IV = OBSE; DV = WDB. In Model 4, IV = JS; DV = WDB; Mediator (M) = OBSE (Direct Path between IV & DV when mediator is there). In Model 5, IV = JS; M = OBSE; DV = WDB (Indirect Path between M & DV).

### DISCUSSION

This study investigated the effect of Job Stress (JS) on Workplace Deviant Behavior (WDB); effect of Organization-Based Self-Esteem (OBSE) on WDB and evaluated the mediating role of OBSE for the JS-WDB relationship in employees. Results showed that JS affects WDB positively (hypothesis 1) and OBSE affects WDB negatively (hypothesis 2). In order to test the mediation effect of OBSE on JS and WDB, Baron and Kenny (1986) approach were applied. It was discovered that JS has a negative influence on OBSE, which in turn influence WDB positively (hypothesis 3). The results presented here (see Tables 1-2) were consistent with previously reported findings (M. Gökhan Bitmiş et al., 2015; Burke et al., 2015; Ventura et al., 2015; Laschinger and Fida, 2014; De Witte, 1999).

The results of hypothesis 1 align with the previous literature' findings of Omar, Halim, Zainah, Farhadi, Nasir & Kairudin (2011); Zainuddin (2006); Ugrin et al., (2008); Naser Hoboubi et al, 2016; Spector & Fox, (2005); Mitchell & Ambros, (2007); Chen & Spector, (1992); Junaedi and Wulani, (2021); Swimberghe et al., (2014). Extensive research has been done but the results are varying. Most research showed positive correlation between JS and WDB such as Michelle Vindya Silva, (2017); Omar, Halim, Zainah, Farhadi, Nasir & Kairudin (2011); Garrett and James's (2008); Junaedi and Wulani, (2021); Swimberghe et al., (2014). Whereas Zainuddin (2006) and Naser Hoboubi et al, 2016 indicated moderate correlation between occupational stress and workplace deviant behavior. Furthermore, one of the research conducted in Nigeria (Emenike & Chiedozi et al, 2017) discovered that JS doesn't significantly predict the WDB. A possible reason could be the uncertainty of finding another job when one is fired due to incivility and perceived threat to the organisation in Nigeria.

Regarding the hypothesis 2, we have found few research that have revealed the similar findings to our results. These are the works of Orth et al., (2010); Twenge & Campbell, (2009); Baumeister et al.; Miller, (2001); Tedeschi, (2001); Ferris et al. and Thau & Mitchell, (2010). It is discovered from the results and the findings from different research that employees who have a strong feeling of self-worth and belonging in their workplace are less likely to engage in "organisational deviance," which is the behaviour that goes against the company's rules and principles. In order to lower the possibility of employees participating in deviant behavior, it is advised that organisations should concentrate on employing people who have high levels of OBSE. Moreover, an individual can be able to feel the sense of confidence and self-worth if the organization understands the workers' needs for belonging and good self-worth in the workplace.

With regards to hypothesis 3, The study showed that there is a significant negative relationship between JS and OBSE as when employees are stressed in their workplace, they have diminished self-esteem (Vázquez-Ortiz et al., 2012; Fincka et al., 2018; Schieman and Bierman, 2011). It has been found in the study of Sánchez, 2014 that a lack of personal accomplishment causes low self-esteem and job demotivation in the burnout and self-esteem relationship. Burnout, which is brought on by extended periods of stress, can result in a lack of accomplishment on the part of the individual, low self-esteem, and demotivation at work. Burnout can make a person feel unworthy and unaccomplished, which lowers their self-esteem and, in turn, makes them less enthusiastic about their work. In the research conducted by Beck and Alford, 2009 it was revealed that those who have experienced depression in the past frequently express much lower levels of self-esteem. Self-esteem correlated negatively with goal-striving stress. Whereas in the previous hypothesis the relationship between OBSE and WDB came out to be negatively correlated (Orth et al.,

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2010; Twenge & Campbell, 2009). Research has suggested that the work environment (work overload, interpersonal conflicts) is negatively related to the OBSE which in turn influence the occurrence of workplace deviance (Miao and colleagues, 2017). In explanation, it means negative work experiences which causes job stress can lead to a decrease in self-esteem, which can in turn lead to the deviant behavior in the workplace. Thus, the current findings suggests that there is an indirect effect between job stress and deviant workplace behavior which is mediated by OBSE.

This implies that to sustain high levels of organizational-based self-esteem (OBSE), both individuals and organisations must work to reduce job stress. By doing this, it can lessen the possibility of workplace deviation. Employees can take action to control their own stress levels and make self-care a priority, and businesses can foster a positive work environment and develop policies and programmes to assist employees in controlling work-related stress. People are more likely to have a sense of belonging and positive self-worth within the organisation through lowering job stress and fostering a healthy work environment, which can help to avoid workplace deviance. By shunning workplace deviance, a lot of issues can be resolved that results in the loss of millions of dollars. Serious implications such as high manufacturing costs, variable service quality and price, a bad service reputation, and lost sales and earnings (Biron, 2010; Nasir and Bashir, 2012), can be prevented. It may also weaken employee trust, decrease job satisfaction, and elevate the risk of turnover besides physical and mental health problems (Nielsen and Knardahl, 2015). People who are the targets of such abnormal behaviour at work are likely to suffer a variety of unfavourable consequences, including being forced to resign, having their productivity and morale reduced, and losing out on work hours (O'Leary-Kell et al, 1996). Therefore, it's crucial to inhibit the occurrence of deviant behavior in the workplace.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Job Stress (JS) and Organization-Based Self-Esteem (OBSE) came out to be predictors of Workplace Deviant Behavior (WDB) in India. Results indicated that JS positively correlates to WDB whereas OBSE negatively correlates to WDB. Through the regression analysis done by SPSS Version 28, it was revealed that Organization-Based Self-Esteem is a perfect mediator in the relationship between Job Stress and Workplace Deviant Behavior.

### *Limitations and Future Directions*

The sample size (n= 210) is too small. As a result, the study cannot be applied to the general populace. Hence Large sample sizes should be considered in future studies. Furthermore, because the study did not analyse the various WDB dimensions in depth, future research should do so in order to gain a deeper knowledge of the variables. Employee diversity and individual demographic backgrounds, such as area, religion, work history, title, organisation size, and designation, are important components of an organisation. Future research should examine the effects of these demographic characteristics since they were not considered in depth in the current study when collecting data. Additionally, future research could examine the relationship between Workplace Ostracism and Workplace Deviant Behavior as there are a handful of research been explored in this topic.

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