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Proceedings Journal

ICoPS2023Bosnia

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e-IPH
e-International
Publishing House Ltd.,
United Kingdom

International Conference on Public Policy & Social Sciences 2023
13-15 September 2023
Organized by the Faculty of Administrative Science & Policy Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Seremban Campus, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, and International University of Sarajevo (IUS), Bosnia and Herzegovina

Public Accountability and Deviant Behavior

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Abstract
The objective of this study is to conduct empirical research on the issue of deviant behavior among public administrators. The study defines deviance as multidimensional constructs, encompassing both organizational and interpersonal deviances, and identifies four public accountability dimensions – external accountability, internal accountability, leadership, and personality – as contributing factors to the deviance problem. Structural equation modeling revealed all constructs to be valid and reliable, with a well-fitted model. Notably, public accountability dimensions, except for leadership, have been found to significantly influence organizational and interpersonal deviance. Decision-makers can use the findings to better understand the effects of public accountability on deviant behavior.

Keywords: Organisational deviance; interpersonal deviance; public accountability.

1.0 Introduction
Public accountability consists of two connotations: 'public' and 'accountability' which explain the multiple accountabilities performed by public managers in providing services and common goods that are worthwhile, accessible, and of high quality. Past studies have identified that public accountability includes both organizational and individual factors. External accountability, internal accountability, and leadership roles are all considered organizational factors in this study. Personal factors, on the other hand, include personality traits. As pointed out in previous studies, the liability of public accountability is associated with changes in employee behavior, particularly pessimistic behavior, organizational cynicism, antisocial behavior, delinquencies, incivility, abusive or inappropriate communication, abuse of power, and withdrawal. These behaviors can be attributed to organizational and interpersonal deviances. (Hamoudah, Othman, Abdul Rahman, Mohd Noor, & Alamoudi, 2021; Patterson & Baron, 2010).

Public accountability, therefore, entails organizational and interpersonal deviances. Thus, it is important to understand the influence of workplace factors on negative behavior at work, especially in the public sector, where accountability is a priority. The association between accountability and deviant tendencies can have significant implications for the economic resources, trust, and stability of the nation. The study aimed to analyze each factor and its correlation with deviant behavior. Four components of public accountability

(external responsibility, internal responsibility, leadership roles, and personality traits) are believed to influence deviant behavior in the public sector (Overman & Schillemans, 2022). As per the determination, the proposition of this research is presented as:

Proposition: Public accountability (external accountability, internal accountability, leadership, and personality) is related to deviant behaviors (organizational deviance and interpersonal deviance).

2.0 Literature Review

Public organizations must address the deviance issue because interpersonal and organizational deviance have economic, social, organizational, and personal repercussions. Organizational deviance, which includes production and property deviance, such as the stoppage of work activities, bribery, stealing, and leakage of confidential information, leads to a decline in productivity and affects revenue, employee satisfaction, and overall organizational performance. Similarly, interpersonal deviance, which includes political and personal aggression such as biases, favoritism, workplace mobbing, and verbal and physical aggression, is known to hurt group members as a result of interactions between offenders and victims, which cause psychological and physical problems. These behaviors affect employees' self-esteem, confidence, motivation, and, eventually, the quality of services shown. Various deviance models and types have been discussed in deviant studies, and organizational and interpersonal deviance have been used as the research tools due to their high validity and reliability. However, it is unknown whether this tool is suitable for the current study given the unique environment of Malaysia's public sector, thus it is necessary to assess its relevancy within this framework (Robinson & Bennet, 1995; Wulani, Handoko, & Purwanto, 2022).

Authors from a variety of disciplines have put forth specific public accountability dimensions for use by researchers and practitioners in earlier studies. The terminology used to describe the set of criteria that make up public accountability is currently up for debate. The current study aims to examine various facets of public accountability and their connection to deviant behavior. The review defines public accountability as multiple accountabilities performed, including adhering to specific rules and regulations and balancing the competing demands of various constituents. Further, the tasks are closely monitored by leaders and supported by commendable personalities. Previous studies revealed a scarcity of research on the direct relationship between public accountability and deviant behavior. External accountability, internal accountability, leadership, and personality have all been studied separately to determine their relationship with employee behavior. There have been few deviant studies that incorporate all of these factors as dimensions of public accountability (Overman & Schillemans, 2022; Romzek & Dubnick, 1987).

Under external accountability, employees must concentrate on external relationships. To maintain the relationship, employees exercise legal and political accountabilities to ensure that employees follow judicial decisions and legislative mandates through collaborations, joint activities, and partnerships with outsiders. Public administrators possessed a high degree of autonomy, power, professional expertise, and knowledge in dealing with external parties. Through the government slogan "Malaysia Madani", public employees deliver their core duties emphasizing shared responsibility in raising human dignity through six core values – sustainability, prosperity, innovation, respect, trust, and compassion. As a result, it was hypothesized that external accountability gives employees a platform to shape their behavior and has a significant relationship with deviant behavior, cyber deviance, resistance to change, and a lack of commitment (Agostino, Saliterer, & Steccolini, 2022; Romzek & Dubnick, 1987).

Internal accountability explains hierarchical accountability and the professional acts of public employees. Employees are held accountable for their actions and must work under close supervision while following organization policies, practices, standards, and quality management system (QMS), and fostering a great workplace culture. Internal accountability through bureaucratic structure, promotional processes, and quality management, according to prior research, is a factor in some types of deviant behavior, including bullying, uncooperative behavior, and a decline in professionalism (Nik Hazimah Nik Mat & Zaharul Nizal Zabidi, 2010; Romzek & Dubnick, 1987).

In the public sector, leaders take on many different roles. They could help identify the ideal balance of organizational values. They have a distinct excellence culture, a knowledge-based mindset, a clear vision, trust, efficient communication, participation, and encouragement. Therefore, leaders are in favor of any requirements for public accountability. They display a favorable attitude towards upholding the organization's relationships with its members and a prudent approach to spending. Leaders can affect public employees' behaviors, including their protégés' incivility, deviant behavior, and passive-aggressive behavior. This study uses the leadership model by Quinn (1988), which contends that dynamic leadership exhibits dynamism, responds to environmental needs, and possesses strong interpersonal skills. An organization's members can learn the most from leaders because they serve as a good example (Hamoudah et al., 2021; Hooijberg & Choi, 2001; Romzek & Dubnick, 1987).

Public accountability requires consideration of personality. Public accountability necessitates a person-environment fit through commendable personality traits to maximize an individual's capacity to perform jobs. Public sector employees are urged to be proactive and foresee future developments. Incentives like the civil service personality award encourage the growth of positive personality traits in this regard. Research has shown that personality can predict career success and control rebellious behavior. Due to this, the researcher aims to examine whether the big five personality traits proposed by Lussier (2008) have a significant association with deviant behavior. Studies have found a connection between personality and deviant behaviors like interpersonal deviance, organizational cynicism, feedback-seeking behavior, and little napoleons (Lussier, 2008; Nur Husnina, Nurfara Ain, & Aida, 2022).

Based on the assumption that public accountability influences deviant behavior and that behavior is harmful to public sector organizations, this further allows the researcher to examine each dimension of public accountability and its significant association with deviant behavior. The Social Learning Theory (SLT), which contends that organizations influence people's attitudes and behaviors, gave rise to the idea. According to SLT, people develop their attitudes and behaviors by observing and imitating the actions of others. This

theory contends that internal and external accountability offers opportunities for people to learn. The effectiveness of public sector leadership as role models has influenced how other people exhibit desirable personality traits to deliver the best service and meet public sector goals. Public accountability is assumed to increase an employee's propensity to behave in a desired or constructive manner. Thus, the study concludes that accountability and deviant behavior are correlated (Akers, Krohn, Lanza-reduce, & Radosevich, 1979; Gadi, Bagobiri, & Ali, 2022; Wulani et al., 2022).

3.0 Research Methodology

Through a cross-sectional survey, this study used a quantitative design. The participants consist of public administrators in Malaysian federal ministries located in the Federal Territories of Putrajaya and Kuala Lumpur. Public administrators are a group of professional employees, highly knowledgeable and experienced, and are known as the key people in the public organization. The Public Complaints Bureau and Public Accounts Committee reported that public employees were involved in organizational deviance, while CUEPACS reported that public employees were involved in interpersonal deviance (Siti-Nabiha Abdul Khalid, 2010). In this study, 981 questionnaires were distributed through a systematic random sampling method to public administrators from seven ministries that indicated their willingness to participate in the study, 447 employees responded, however, only 410 questionnaires were used in the final analysis, and the sample size is adequate and within the acceptable range. Survey questions for organizational deviance (6 items) and interpersonal deviance (6 items) were derived from Robinson and Bennett (1995), external (9 items) and internal accountability (8 items) were derived from Kim and Lee (2009), leadership (20 items) derived from Quinn (1988), and personality (25 items) derived from Lussier (2008). To indicate the frequency of the perceived research variables, all responses were answered on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never), 2 (rarely), 3 (often), and 4 (very often). Research instruments were validated through conceptual definition and statistical evidence. A two-step approach was used in this study, which used structural equation modeling. The first step was to create a measurement model using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), which defined the relationships between latent constructs (unobserved) and indicators (observed). The measurement model aims to evaluate the unidimensionality, reliability, and validity of research instruments. The second step is to create a path and structural model that describe the relationship between dependent and independent variables to test the hypotheses (Chua, 2011; Kim & Lee, 2009; Krejcie & Morgan, 1970; Lussier, 2008; Quinn, 1988; Robinson & Bennet, 1995; Zainudin Awang, 2014).

4.0 Research Findings

The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) has been performed to check the validity and reliability of the research instruments. The study has achieved convergent validity (Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value ≥ 0.50), construct validity (all the fitness indices are observed; absolute and incremental fit indices, and results within the recommended value), and discriminant validity (the correlation between constructs are below 0.850). For the reliability test, the study shows that Cronbach's Alpha coefficient value exceeded the acceptable standard of reliability analysis ($\alpha > 0.70$) for all the variables, indicating that the items showed the presence of construct reliability. The results of the measurement model also indicated the presence of composite reliability (CR), all variables have a value of CR above 0.60 and AVE above 0.50. Results of the new model further indicated that the absolute fit measures; GFI, RMSEA, incremental fit measures; NFI, CFI, TLI, and parsimonious fit measure (Cmin/df) exceeded the recommended value and adequately fit the data. The magnitude of all the variables and their indicators are above the reasonable loadings (Standard Regression Weights) of 0.30, which indicates the existence of convergent validity. The estimated parameters are all in the same direction. The critical ratios (C.R.) for all the estimated parameters exceeded the benchmark of ±1.96, which was statistically significant; and the standard errors (S.E.) were not excessively large or small (Pallant, 2013; Zainudin Awang, 2014).

Before conducting any multivariate analysis, several assumptions concerning the use of multivariate statistical tools, namely multicollinearity, outliers, linearity, normality, homoscedasticity, and independence of residuals were also met. The correlation coefficient value reflects that all independent variables showed a relationship with dependent variables. All the correlation values are below .70, indicating that independent variables are independent of each other; therefore, all the variables are retained (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2006). The results indicated that six of the eight hypothesized paths were significant, and six hypotheses were supported. Table 1 shows the path model. Based on the goodness-of-fit indices, the fit measures showed that the model adequately fits the observed data. The model achieved an absolute fit measure; GFI = 0.81, RMSEA = 0.06, incremental fit measure; NFI = 0.85, CFI = 0.83, TLI = 0.92, and parsimony fit measure = χ^2/df = 4.08. All the goodness-of-fit measures were within the recommended value (TLI – Satisfactory Fit; GFI, NFI, CFI – Acceptable Fit) (Zainudin Awang, 2014)

Table 1. Path Model

Fit Indices	Desirable range	Value
CMIN	NIL	7.6
CMIN/DF	≤5	4.08
GFI	≥0.8	0.81
CFI	≥0.8	0.83
NLI	≥0.8	0.85
TLI	≥0.9	0.92
RMSEA	≤0.8	0.6

Regarding regression value, all constructs except leadership showed a significant negative relationship with organizational and interpersonal deviance. External Accountability (β = -0.135, C.R. = -2.369, p < .05), Internal Accountability (β = -0.329, C.R. = -4.434, p < .05), and Personality (β = -0.218, C.R. = -2.197, p < .05) have negative regression values with organizational deviance. Similarly, external accountability (β = -0.117, C.R. = -2.086, p < .05), internal accountability (β = -0.230, C.R. = -3.156, p < .05) and personality (β = -0.266, C.R. = -2.722, p < .05) have a negative regression value with interpersonal deviance. However, leadership has an insignificant positive relationship with organizational deviance (β = 0.192, C.R. = 1.785, p < 0.10) and interpersonal deviance (β = 0.201, C.R. = 1.904, p < 0.10).

Table 2. The Magnitude, Direction, and Statistical Significance of the Estimated Parameters between Latent Variables and their Indicators

DV		IV	Estimate β	S.E.	Critical Ratio C.R.	P	FL*
Organisational Deviance	←	External Accountability	-0.135	0.057	-2.369	0.02	-0.142
Interpersonal Deviance	←	External Accountability	-0.117	0.056	-2.086	0.04	-0.126
Organisational Deviance	←	Internal Accountability	-0.329	0.074	-4.434	***	-0.256
Interpersonal Deviance	←	Internal Accountability	-0.23	0.073	-3.156	0.00	-0.184
Organisational Deviance	←	Leadership	0.192	0.108	1.785	0.074	0.143
Interpersonal Deviance	←	Leadership	0.201	0.106	1.904	0.057	0.154
Organisational Deviance	←	Personality	-0.218	0.099	-2.197	0.03	-0.159
Interpersonal Deviance	←	Personality	-0.266	0.098	-2.722	0.01	-0.2

The structural model (Table 3) indicates the directional relationship between the latent construct of public accountability and the latent construct of deviant behavior. From Table 3, the model shows that the data fit the model, and the goodness of fit indices achieved are as follows; absolute fit measure; GFI = 0.992, RMSEA = 0.048, incremental fit measure; NFI = 0.993, CFI = 0.997, TLI = 0.990, and parsimony fit measure = χ^2/df = 1.933. All variables have achieved high factor loadings, and the path indicates that public accountability has a significant negative relationship with deviant behavior, which coincides with the theoretical discussion. Public accountability provides opportunities for organizational learning (Akers et al., 1979; Di Carlo, 2022; Hamoudah et al., 2021).

Table 3. The results of SEM on the relationship between public accountability and deviant behavior

Second-Order Latent Variables	First-Order Latent Variables	Standardized Factor Loadings
Public Accountability	External Accountability (EA)	0.690
	Internal Accountability (IA)	1.140
	Leadership (LR)	0.867
	Personality (PT)	0.865
Deviant Behavior	Organizational Deviance (OD)	1.034
	Interpersonal Deviance (ID)	0.866
Exogenous Variable	Endogenous Variable	Structural Path
Public Accountability	Deviant Behavior	-0.269
χ^2/df = 1.933, *p*-value = 0.085; GFI = 0.992; AGFI = 0.968; NFI = 0.993; CFI = 0.992; RMSEA = 0.048		

A total of 12.3% of the variance in organizational deviance (OD) was predicted by four direct predictor variables, which included external accountability (EA: -.135), internal accountability (IA: -.329), leadership (LR: .192), and personality (PT: -.218). From the analysis, only three factors were recognized as significant predictors of organizational deviance, among which internal accountability was found to be the most influential determinant, followed by personality and external accountability. Moreover, leadership was identified as an insignificant predictor of organizational deviance. On the other hand, a total of 9.3% of the variance in interpersonal deviance (ID) was explained by the four direct variables, namely external accountability (EA:-.117), internal accountability (IA: -.230), leadership (LR: .201) and personality (PT: -.266). Among these direct predictors of interpersonal deviance, only three factors were significant predictors, with personality identified as the dominant predictor, followed by internal accountability and external accountability. Leadership was an insignificant predictor of interpersonal deviance (Kim & Lee, 2009; Lussier, 2008; Quinn, 1988; Robinson & Bennet, 1995).

5.0 Discussion

By using Social Learning Theory (SLT), the objective of this study to identify the relationship between public accountability and deviant behavior. Although past studies have examined the variables (external accountability, internal accountability, leadership, personality, and deviant behaviors) separately, this study has examined the factors under the realm of public accountability in one analytical framework. The combinations of these factors, which include personal and organizational factors, provide a better explanation for employees' deviant behavior. By using structural equation modeling, the study has proved that key dimensions under public accountability have a negative significant relationship with negative behaviors; thus influencing and adding variances in both types of deviance (Akers et al., 1979; Overman & Schillemans, 2022).

The previous discussion on the influence of an individual's roles and responsibilities on their emotional state is supported by the significant relationship between external and internal accountability with the two deviance classifications. It has been contended that routine tasks are particularly crucial in preventing misbehavior because they provide incentives and spark interest in maintaining the positive reputation of public institutions. After joining the system, the organizations can involve the employees in learning exercises that

will help them better understand how to behave and assume responsibility (Agostino et al., 2022; Robinson & Bennet, 1995; Romzek & Dubnick, 1987).

However, environmental pressure and change affect the performance of external accountability. Many things need to be re-evaluated in the event of changes, particularly the budget, the operational side, and service delivery, which are known to have a direct impact on the task content. As the implementers of public policy, changes can also have an emotional impact on those working in the public sector. Additionally, to maintain the organization's continuity, changes in external accountability necessitate changes in internal accountability. Updating the customers' charter, work ethics, and various internal practices in question occur to maximize organizational flexibility for adhering to environmental changes. Employees must modify their work processes to correspond to environmental needs. Thus, employees' behavior can also be impacted by such changes (Overman & Schillemans, 2022; Romzek & Dubnick, 1987).

This implies that, lacking the desired personality traits, employees eventually engage in deviant behavior. Five personality traits that are linked to misbehavior: surgency, agreeableness, conscientiousness, adjustment, and openness to experience were identified. This study does not specifically examine the effects of each personality trait, only examines the overall contribution of personality to organizational and interpersonal deviances. As a result, it is intriguing to consider how each trait contributes uniquely to interpersonal and organizational deviance. Due to exposure to environmental changes, personality also undergoes constant change. The personalities of the employees can affect their motivation, even though both internal and external accountabilities are well managed. Due to personality differences, some people may find their workplace supportive of their career and encouraging, while others may view it as burdensome and a source of stress (Dewangan & Verghese, 2018; Lussier, 2008).

The study supports the role of leadership in counteracting deviant behavior. Leadership is a contextual factor that supports positive psychological development in this study. The weak influence of leadership upon deviant conduct emphasizes the need for additional study that focuses on supervisor-related deviant behavior to broaden the deviance framework. The deviance studies aimed at supervisory positions have been demonstrated in previous studies to be distinct, in which some employees adopt a pessimistic attitude, and others may voice their displeasure with appropriate behavior toward leaders (Mayer, Thau, Workman, Dijke, & Cremer, 2012).

It can be inferred that there are obstacles to learning that arise as the organization develops. The learning process can be severely restricted if factors, as highlighted in the current study, are ignored. The direct impact of public accountability on deviant behavior was thus investigated in this study using a simple framework. Based on the findings, knowledge and experiences gained through public accountability, aided the learning experience. Routine and non-routine activities, internally and externally focused, through the support of leaders and desirable attitudes, were used to support the learning activities in the area of public accountability, which led to a better operationalization of public accountability. This study thus confirms earlier findings that showed a strong inverse relationship between public accountability, which includes both organizational and individual variables as well as aberrant behavior. Thus, the idea of accountability is broad and ever-evolving (Akers et al., 1979; Overman & Schillemans, 2022; Robinson & Bennet, 1995; Romzek & Dubnick, 1987).

The study is still subject to several theoretical and methodological constraints. The study only applies to aspects of direct relationships between the variables and public accountability. Other elements that ought to have been highlighted include psychological capital and unique life experiences, both of which are known to moderate or mediate the relationship and may add variation to deviant behavior due to unique learning experiences. In addition, a cross-sectional survey was used to conduct the study among public sector employees. It is not always possible to establish causal links between variables and generalize the results, due to external factors that affect the constant components of public accountability and, further, alter employee behavior directly and indirectly. To fully understand the nature of deviant behavior among public administrators, a longitudinal study and a mixed methodology can be used (Di Carlo, 2022; Gomis-Pomares, Villanueva, & Basto-Pereira, 2022).

6.0 Conclusion
It can be concluded that deviant behaviors ranged from minor to major misbehaviors that harmed the organization and its members. Thus, knowledge of deviant behavior could help public sector organizations determine its prevalence and implement preventive measures, as behaviors are the best predictors of organizational success. According to the study, public accountability has led to variations in both types of deviance. The measures used were based on research findings: external accountability, internal accountability, and personality help to reduce deviant behavior.

Acknowledgments

Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study
The study discusses the methodological, practical, and theoretical contributions of public accountability toward deviant conduct within the purview of public administration.

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