

Mediating role of self-regulatory efficacy on the relationship between punishment certainty, punishment severity and organizational deviance

Kabiru Maitama Kura^{a*}, Faridahwati Mohd. Shamsudin^{a,b} and Ajay Chauhan^a

^a*Othman Yeop Abdullah Graduate School of Business, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Sintok, Malaysia*

^b*Department of Management, College of Economics and Political Science, Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat, Oman*

CHRONICLE

ABSTRACT

Article history:

Received July 28, 2013
Accepted 14 January 2014
Available online
February 27 2014

Keywords:

Punishment certainty
Punishment severity
Organisational deviance
Self-regulatory efficacy

Employee deviance is prevalent and could have significant consequences to organizations and/or its members. Drawing upon deterrence theory, this study examined the mediating role of self-regulatory efficacy on the relationship between punishment certainty, punishment severity and organizational deviance. The participants were 197 employed postgraduate students who enrolled in the Master of Business Administration programme at two universities located in the north-west geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The model tested suggests that both punishment certainty and punishment severity predict organizational deviance through the influence of self-regulatory efficacy. Results suggest that self-regulatory efficacy partially mediates the relationship between punishment certainty and organizational deviance. Similarly, results suggest that the relationship between punishment severity and organizational deviance was partially mediated by self-regulatory efficacy.

© 2014 Growing Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Employee deviance has been defined as a “voluntary behaviour that violates significant organizational norms and in so threatens the well-being of an organization, its members, or both” (Robinson & Bennett, 1995, p. 556). Employee deviance is prevalent and could have significant consequences to organizations and/or its members (Aquino, Galperin, & Bennett, 2004; Lawrence & Robinson, 2007; Meier & Semmer, 2012). Given the consequences of employee deviance to organizations and its members, both interpersonal and organizational deviance have been studied by the researchers, including gossip (Kurland & Pelled, 2000; Luna & Shih Yung, 2013), abusive supervision (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Tepper, 2000) and theft, among others (Chen & Spector, 1992; Greenberg, 1990; Hollinger & Clark, 1983). The present study focuses on organizational deviance, a dimension of broad categories of employee deviance (see Aquino *et al.*, 2004; Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Berry, Ones, & Sackett, 2007; Fox & Spector, 1999).

*Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: kmkura@gmail.com (K. M. Kura)

Empirical research suggests that punishment certainty and punishment severity play an important role in minimizing deviant behaviour at work (e.g., Cole, 1989; D'Arcy, Hovav, & Galletta, 2009; Hollinger & Clark, 1983; Liao, Luo, Gurung, & Li, 2009; Ugrin & Pearson, 2008). Punishment severity refers to the nature and extent of punishment for committing deviant behaviour at work (Tittle, 1980), while punishment certainty is defined as making sure that punishment takes place whenever an individual engage in deviant behaviour at work (Onwudiwe, Odo, & Onyeozili, 2005). These studies proposed general deterrence perspective that the greater the certainty and severity of punishment for a deviant act, the less likely individuals will engage in that act (GDT; Beccaria, 1963; Gibbs, 1968; Gibbs, 1975).

Despite these empirical studies on the role of punishment certainty and punishment severity in explaining the likelihood employees to engage in workplace deviance, however, less attention has been paid to the fundamental reason why these two variables (i.e., punishment certainty and punishment severity) minimize individual's tendency to engage in deviant behaviour at work. We argued that self-regulatory efficacy, broadly defined as individual capacity to resist temptation or pressure to behave deviant way may be a key mechanism in explaining organisational deviance. Self-regulatory efficacy is a well established factor that exerts a significant influence on variety of behaviours, including technology adoption behaviour (Igarria & Iivari, 1995; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998), career choice behaviour (Betz & Hackett, 2006; Mau, 2000), newcomers' adjustments to organizations (Saks, 1995), group performance (Hoyt, Murphy, Halverson, & Watson, 2003; Katz-Navon & Erez, 2005) and deviant behaviour among others (Caprara, Regalia, & Bandura, 2002; Caprara, Scabini, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, Regalia, & Bandura, 1998). According to Bandura (1992), perceived self-efficacy is an important consideration in understanding the levels of motivation and performance accomplishments; because it is able to shape the way individuals feel, think, and behave.

The logic here is that self-regulatory efficacy is the fundamental reason why punishment certainty and punishment severity predicts organisational deviance at work. This line of argument is consistent with the tenets of self-efficacy theory that self-regulatory efficacy mechanism may have wide explanatory power in explaining goal-related behaviour (Bandura, 1978, 1982; Bandura, 1992). The purpose of this study was to examine the mediating role of self-regulatory efficacy on the relationship between punishment certainty, punishment severity and organizational deviance in Nigerian public sector. Drawing upon deterrence theory and self-efficacy theory, it was hypothesized that self-regulatory efficacy would mediate the relationship between punishment certainty, punishment severity and organizational deviance.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Data collection and sample

Participants were 197 employed postgraduate students who enrolled in the Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme at two universities located in the north-west geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Of 197 participants, 65.5% were male and the remaining 34.5% were female. The mean age of the participants was 38 years. The participants were predominantly of Yorubas (53.8%), next in terms of frequently were Hausa/Fulani, Minority Ethnic makeup and Igbos with 33.5%, 6.6% and 6.1% respectively. Majority of the participants (71.6%) got married, while the remaining 28.4% were single. In terms of job position, 66.5% were Managers, and 33.5% were non-managerial employees. Most participants worked in public sector (66%) and the remaining 34% worked in private sector.

2.2 Measures

2.2.1 Organizational deviance

Organizational deviance was assessed using 8 items adapted from previous studies (e.g., Aquino *et*

al., 2004; Aquino, Lewis, & Bradfield, 1999; Bennett & Robinson, 2000). The respondents were asked to indicate their responses using 5-point Likert-scale ranging from (1) = “strongly disagree” to (5) = “strongly agree”. A sample item is “How often do you make unauthorized use of organizational property?”

2.2.2 Punishment certainty

Punishment certainty was measured with the average of 4-items from Grasmick and Bursik’s (1990) Punishment Certainty Scale. Responses were given on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from (1) = “definitely would not” to (5) = “definitely would”). A sample Punishment Certainty Scale item is “Do you think you would get punished if you left work early without permission?”

2.2.3 Punishment severity

Punishment severity was measured with the average of 5-items from Grasmick and Bursik’s (1990) Punishment Severity Scale. In all cases, we asked the participants to indicate their responses on 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) = “no problem at all” to (5) = “a very big problem”). A sample Punishment Severity Scale item is “If you were caught taking undeserved breaks to avoid work... how severe this act may be?”

2.2.4 Self-regulatory efficacy

Self-regulatory efficacy was assessed based on Bandura’s (1990) Multidimensional Scales of Perceived Self-Efficacy. All items used for the self-regulatory efficacy scale were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) = “not well at all” to (5) = “extremely well”). A sample self-regulatory efficacy item is “How well can resist temptation for making unauthorized use of organizational property?”

3. Results

To test the mediating effects of self-regulatory efficacy on the relationship between punishment certainty, punishment severity and organizational deviance, we followed bootstrapping technique for procedures for estimating the direct and indirect effects in simple mediation models (Preacher & Hayes, 2008; Preacher & Hayes, 2004). First, we assess the significance of the direct effect without incorporating mediating variable in the model. Second, we created another PLS model by incorporating mediating variable and assess the significance of the indirect effect. Finally, we assess the variance accounted for (VAF) to ascertain whether the mediating effect is either full or partial or even no mediation at all. We estimated two models using this procedure. Firstly, we tested the mediating effect of self-regulatory efficacy on the relationship between punishment certainty and organizational deviance. Secondly, the mediating effect of self-regulatory efficacy on the relationship between punishment severity and organizational deviance was tested. Figure 1 depicts the results of the two models.

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations between the study variables. Punishment certainty correlated negatively with organizational deviance, $r = -0.35$, $p < .001$, punishment severity was related negatively to organizational deviance, $r = -0.23$, $p < .001$, but positively to punishment certainty, $r = 0.18$, $p < .001$. Self-regulatory efficacy correlated with negatively with organizational deviance, $r = -0.39$, $p < .001$. Furthermore, Self-regulatory efficacy was positively correlated with both punishment certainty and punishment severity, having $r = 0.63$, $p < .001$ and $r = 0.18$, $p < .001$, respectively. Table 1 also shows that internal consistency reliability coefficient of each study variable was greater than the minimum acceptable level of 0.7, suggesting adequate internal of the measures adapted in this study (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988).

Table 1*Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations between variables*

	Variable	Mean	Std.	1	2	3	4
1	Organizational deviance	2.01	0.69	(0.91)			
2	Punishment certainty	3.81	0.67	-0.35**	(0.89)		
3	Punishment severity	3.51	0.61	-0.23**	0.18**	(0.89)	
4	Self-regulatory efficacy	3.81	0.62	-0.39**	0.63**	0.18**	(0.88)

Entries listed on diagonal represent the reliabilities for each scale.

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Regarding the mediating effect of self-regulatory efficacy on the relationship between punishment certainty and organizational deviance, the bootstrapping results showed that the total effect of punishment certainty on organizational deviance (total effect of punishment certainty = -0.36 , $p < 0.01$) decreased when the self-regulatory efficacy was incorporated into the model (direct effect of punishment certainty = -0.18 , $p < .05$). Furthermore, the indirect effect (i.e., total minus direct effects) of punishment certainty on organizational deviance behaviour through the self-regulatory efficacy was found to be significant ($\beta = -0.18$, $p < 0.01$, VAF = 50%). This suggests that self-regulatory efficacy partially mediates the relationship between punishment certainty and organizational deviance since $20\% \leq \text{VAF} \leq 80\%$ (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2013; Shrout & Bolger, 2002).

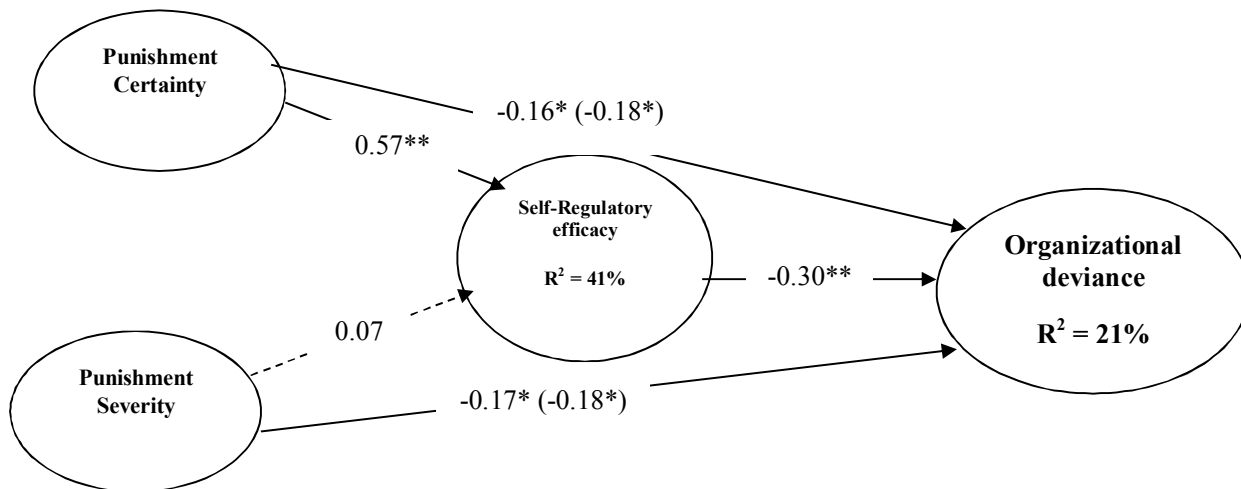


Fig. 1. The results of mediation analyses, based on 5000 bootstrap samples

The path values represent unstandardized regression coefficient, while entries in parentheses represents the direct effect of punishment certainty and punishment severity on organizational deviance after incorporating self-regulatory efficacy into the model.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$ (1-tailed).

A similar pattern of results was also found for punishment severity. The bootstrapping results demonstrated that the total effect of punishment severity on organizational deviance (total effect of punishment severity = -0.25 , $p < 0.01$) decreased when the self-regulatory efficacy was incorporated into the model (direct effect of punishment severity = -0.18 , $p < .05$). Furthermore, the indirect effect (i.e., total minus direct effects) of punishment severity on organizational deviance behaviour through the self-regulatory efficacy was found to be significant ($\beta = -0.07$, $p < 0.01$, VAF = 71%). This suggests that the relationship between punishment severity and organizational deviance was partially mediated by self-regulatory efficacy, since $20\% \leq \text{VAF} \leq 80\%$ (Hair *et al.*, 2013; Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Regarding the R-squared values, the research model explains 21% of the total variance in organisational deviance, suggesting that punishment certainty and punishment severity

collectively explain 21% of the variance of organisational deviance. . Falk and Miller (1992) recommended 10% as acceptable R-squared value. Therefore, following this criteria, the R-squared value of 21% can be considered acceptable.

4. Discussions

The main objective of this study was to examine self-regulatory efficacy as mechanism explaining the relationship between punishment certainty, punishment severity and organizational deviance. Overall, the mediating results appear to be consistent with the view that self-regulatory efficacy is an important cognitive resource that can motivate individual to refrain from engaging in deviant acts (Bandura, 1986; Caprara *et al.*, 2002), self-regulatory efficacy was not only negative related to organizational deviance, but, it also mediates the relationship between punishment certainty and organizational deviance as well as the relationship between punishment severity and organizational deviance. This suggests that employees who are high in self-regulatory efficacy are less likely to engage in organizational deviance because they are capable of resisting the influence of situational factors.

Therefore, the results of the current study appear to have important implications for the organizations and managers. First, the finding that self-regulatory efficacy was negatively related to organisational deviance demonstrates that the personality trait (i.e., perception of self-regulatory efficacy play a significant role in influencing behaviors at work. This finding can help management to identify employees who are more likely to engage in organisational deviance. The finding suggests that management should consider personality factors during recruitment, selection, induction and periodic performance appraisal.

Furthermore, while the results of this study provide further support for a number of the hypothesized relationships between the exogenous and endogenous variables, however, it would be relevant to note some of its limitations. First, the present study adopts a cross-sectional design, which does not allow causal inferences to be made from the population. Therefore, future research is needed using a longitudinal design, in order to measure the theoretical constructs at different points in time to confirm the findings of the present study.

Second, the workplace deviance was assessed using self-report measures. According to Bennett and Robinson (2000) self-report measures are valid in assessing deviant behaviour at work, particularly when anonymity was assured during the data collection. Nevertheless, the use of self-reports is associated with common method variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003) and social desirability bias (Dodaj, 2012; Podsakoff & Organ, 1986; Randall & Fernandes, 1991). Although this study attempts to reduce these problems by ensuring anonymity and improving scale items (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012), however, it is possible that the participants in this study might have under-reported their deviance on survey questionnaires. Therefore, in the future, researchers may wish to employ other strategies to assess workplace deviance. More specifically, supervisor ratings of workplace deviance and peers reporting of workplace deviance should be used to control for the common method variance and social desirability bias.

5. Conclusions

This study was an attempt to examine self-regulatory efficacy as a mediator on the relationship between punishment certainty, punishment severity and organizational deviance. The findings from the current research suggest that self-regulatory efficacy mediates the relationship between punishment certainty and organizational deviance as well as the relationship between punishment severity and organizational deviance. This study also emphasizes the importance of punishment

certainty and punishment severity as determinants of organizational deviance. Taken together, the findings suggest that punishment certainty, punishment severity and self-regulatory efficacy are effective in minimizing the tendency of employees to engage in deviant acts.

References

- Aquino, K., Galperin, B. L., & Bennett, R. J. (2004). Social status and aggressiveness as moderators of the relationship between interactional justice and workplace deviance. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 34*, 1001-1029. doi: 10.1111/j.1559-1816.2004.tb02581.x
- Aquino, K., Lewis, M. U., & Bradfield, M. (1999). Justice constructs, negative affectivity, and employee deviance: A proposed model and empirical. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour, 20*, 1073-1091.
- Bagozzi, R., & Yi, Y. (1988). On the evaluation of structural equation models. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 16*, 74-94. doi: 10.1007/bf02723327
- Bandura, A. (1978). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Advances in Behaviour Research and Therapy, 1*, 139-161. doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0146-6402\(78\)90002-4](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0146-6402(78)90002-4)
- Bandura, A. (1982). Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. *American Psychologist, 37*, 122-147. doi: 10.1037/0003-066x.37.2.122
- Bandura, A. (1986). The explanatory and predictive scope of self-efficacy theory. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 4*, 359-373.
- Bandura, A. (1990). *Multidimensional scales of perceived self-efficacy*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University.
- Bandura, A. (1992). Exercise of personal agency through the self efficacy mechanisms. In R. Schwarzer (Ed.), *Self-efficacy: Thought control of action* (pp. 3-38). Washington, DC: Hemisphere.
- Beccaria, C. (1963). *On crimes and punishments* (H. Paolucci, ed., Trans.). New York: Bobbs-Merrill. (Original work published 1764).
- Bennett, R. J., & Robinson, S. L. (2000). Development of a measure of workplace deviance. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 85*, 349-360. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.85.3.349
- Berry, C. M., Ones, D. S., & Sackett, P. R. (2007). Interpersonal deviance, organizational deviance, and their common correlates: A review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 92*, 410-424. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.92.2.410
- Betz, N. E., & Hackett, G. (2006). Career self-efficacy theory: Back to the future. *Journal of Career Assessment, 14*(1), 3-11. doi: 10.1177/1069072705281347
- Caprara, G. V., Regalia, C., & Bandura, A. (2002). Longitudinal impact of perceived self-regulatory efficacy on violent conduct. *European Psychologist, 7*, 63-69. doi: 10.1027//1016-9040.7.1.63
- Caprara, G. V., Scabini, E., Barbaranelli, C., Pastorelli, C., Regalia, C., & Bandura, A. (1998). Impact of adolescents' perceived self-regulatory efficacy on familial communication and antisocial conduct. *European Psychologist, 3*, 125-132. doi: 10.1027//1016-9040.3.2.125
- Chen, P. Y., & Spector, P. E. (1992). Relationships of work stressors with aggression, withdrawal, theft and substance use: An exploratory study. *Journal of Occupational & Organizational Psychology, 65*, 177-184.
- Cole, C. A. (1989). Deterrence and consumer fraud. *Journal of Retailing, 65*, 107-120.
- D'Arcy, J., Hovav, A., & Galletta, D. (2009). User awareness of security countermeasures and its impact on information systems misuse: A deterrence approach. [Article]. *Information Systems Research, 20*(1), 79-98.
- Dodaj, A. (2012). Social desirability and self-reports: Testing a content and response-style model of socially desirable responding. *Europe's Journal of Psychology, 8*, 651-666.
- Falk, R. F., & Miller, N. B. (1992). *A primer for soft modeling*. Ohio: The University of Akron Press.
- Fox, S., & Spector, P. E. (1999). A model of work frustration-aggression. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 20*, 915-931.

- Gibbs, J. P. (1968). Crime, punishment and deterrence. *Southwestern Social Science Quarterly*, 48, 515–530.
- Gibbs, J. P. (1975). *Crime, punishment, and deterrence*. New York, NY: Elsevier.
- Grasmick, H. G., & Bursik, R. J. (1990). Conscience, Significant Others, and Rational Choice: Extending the Deterrence Model. *Law & Society Review*, 24, 837-861. doi: 10.2307/3053861
- Greenberg, J. (1990). Employee theft as a reaction to underpayment inequity: The hidden cost of pay cuts. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 75, 561-568. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.75.5.561
- Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2013). *A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Hollinger, R. C., & Clark, J. P. (1983). Deterrence in the workplace: Perceived certainty, perceived severity, and employee theft. *Social Forces*, 62, 398-418.
- Hoyt, C. L., Murphy, S. E., Halverson, S. K., & Watson, C. B. (2003). Group leadership: Efficacy and effectiveness. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 7, 259-274. doi: 10.1037/1089-2699.7.4.259
- Igbaria, M., & Iivari, J. (1995). The effects of self-efficacy on computer usage. *Omega*, 23(6), 587-605. doi: 10.1016/0305-0483(95)00035-6
- Katz-Navon, T. Y., & Erez, M. (2005). When collective- and self-efficacy affect team performance: The role of task interdependence. *Small Group Research*, 36, 437-465. doi: 10.1177/1046496405275233
- Kurland, N. B., & Pelled, L. H. (2000). Passing the word: Toward a model of gossip and power in the workplace. *Academy of management review*, 428-438.
- Lawrence, T. B., & Robinson, S. L. (2007). Ain't misbehavin': Workplace deviance as organizational resistance. *Journal of Management*, 33, 378-394. doi: 10.1177/0149206307300816
- Liao, Q., Luo, X., Gurung, A., & Li, L. (2009). Workplace management and employee misuse: Does punishment matter? [Article]. *Journal of Computer Information Systems*, 50(2), 49-59.
- Luna, A., & Shih Yung, C. (2013). Drivers for workplace gossip: An application of the theory of planned behaviour. *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications & Conflict*, 17, 115-129.
- Mau, W.-C. (2000). Cultural differences in career decision-making styles and self-efficacy. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 57, 365-378. doi: 10.1006/jvbe.1999.1745
- Meier, L. L., & Semmer, N. K. (2012). Lack of reciprocity, narcissism, anger, and instigated workplace incivility: A moderated mediation model. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 22, 461-475. doi: 10.1080/1359432x.2012.654605
- Mitchell, M. S., & Ambrose, M. L. (2007). Abusive supervision and workplace deviance and the moderating effects of negative reciprocity beliefs. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92, 1159-1168. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.92.4.1159
- Onwudiwe, I., Odo, J., & Onyeozili, E. (2005). Deterrence theory. In M. M. Bosworth (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of prisons & correctional facilities* (pp. 234-238). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J.-Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: a critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88, 879-903.
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2012). Sources of method bias in social science research and recommendations on how to control it. *Annual review of psychology*, 63, 539-569.
- Podsakoff, P. M., & Organ, D. W. (1986). Self-reports in organizational research: Problems and prospects. *Journal of Management*, 12, 531-544. doi: 10.1177/014920638601200408
- Preacher, K. J., & Hayes, A. (2008). Asymptotic and resampling strategies for assessing and comparing indirect effects in multiple mediator models. *Behavior Research Methods*, 40, 879-891. doi: 10.3758/brm.40.3.879
- Preacher, K. J., & Hayes, A. F. (2004). SPSS and SAS procedures for estimating indirect effects in simple mediation models. *Behavior Research Methods, Instruments, & Computers*, 36, 717-731. doi: 10.3758/bf03206553

- Randall, D. M., & Fernandes, M. F. (1991). The social desirability response bias in ethics research. *Journal of Business Ethics, 10*, 805-817.
- Robinson, S. L., & Bennett, R. J. (1995). A typology of deviant workplace behaviors: A multidimensional scaling study. *Academy of Management Journal, 38*, 555-572.
- Saks, A. M. (1995). Longitudinal field investigation of the moderating and mediating effects of self-efficacy on the relationship between training and newcomer adjustment. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 80*, 211-225. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.80.2.211
- Shrout, P. E., & Bolger, N. (2002). Mediation in experimental and nonexperimental studies: New procedures and recommendations. *Psychological Methods, 7*, 422-445. doi: 10.1037/1082-989x.7.4.422
- Stajkovic, A. D., & Luthans, F. (1998). Self-efficacy and work-related performance: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 124*, 240-261. doi: 10.1037/0033-2909.124.2.240
- Tepper, B. J. (2000). Consequences of abusive supervision. *Academy of Management Journal, 43*, 178-190. doi: 10.2307/1556375
- Tittle, C. R. (1980). *Sanctions and Social Deviance: The Question of Deterrence*. New York: Praeger
- Ugrin, J. C., & Pearson, J. M. (2008). Exploring Internet abuse in the workplace: How can we maximize deterrence efforts? *Review of Business, 28*, 29-40.