



Entitlement and conscientiousness in the prediction of organizational deviance



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ABSTRACT

Responding to Wu and LeBreton's (2011) call for further study, this paper examines dispositional predictors of organizational deviance. In a sample of 428 participants, self-report data were collected anonymously. Using hierarchical regression, the dispositional variables of entitlement and conscientiousness were similarly strong and statistically significant predictors of organizational deviance. The total variance explained in deviance by these variables and some demographic variables was .31. Additionally, the specificity matching principle suggests that narrow band traits like entitlement are better at predicting narrowly measured behaviors like deviance than are broad band traits like conscientiousness. Using dominance analysis, entitlement was a stronger predictor of organizational deviance than is conscientiousness.

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1. Introduction

Maladaptive personality at work (Geunole, 2014) and dispositional predictors of organizational deviance (Wu & LeBreton, 2011) are hot topics of late. The role of broad dispositions as operationalized by the Big Five personality traits in the prediction of broadly-measured job performance has been well studied (e.g. Barrick & Mount, 1991; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000; Tett, Jackson, & Rothstein, 1991), but most research on the dispositional predictors of the more narrowly-construed components of job performance like organizational deviance has focused on the narrow traits of the “dark triad” of personality (Jakobowitz & Egan, 2006; Paulhus & Williams, 2002): Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. Such narrow traits have more specific definitions and tend to predict specific and narrowly defined behaviors more readily than do broadly measured traits (Schneider, Hough, & Dunnette, 1996). The dilemma over the use of broadly or narrowly measured personality constructs in the prediction of broad or narrow criteria began in earnest with Cronbach's (1960) application of Shannon and Weaver's (1949) treatise on bandwidth and fidelity. Disagreement has subsided regarding the definition of a narrow or broad trait (see Ones & Viswesvaran, 1996 and Schneider et al., 1996), so the bandwidth versus fidelity dilemma has crystallized into the specificity matching principle advocated by both

attitude (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005) and trait researchers (Epstein, 1979; Fleeson, 2004). For example, in a test of this principle, Hastings and O'Neill (2009) found that the emotionality facet of openness-to-experience resulted in a stronger relationship with deviant behavior than did the more broadly measured higher order construct of openness-to-experience. The current study examines both broad and narrow dispositional predictors of organizational deviance as a test of the specificity matching principle.

1.1. Organizational deviance

Undesirable workplace behaviors have been studied under the heading of general workplace deviance (Hastings & O'Neill, 2009), counterproductive workplace behaviors (Gruys & Sackett, 2003), and both organizationally-directed and interpersonally-directed forms of deviance (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Much of the literature in this area can be characterized as disjointed and lacking a consistent terminology (Fox & Spector, 2005), but its areas “share some conceptual overlap in that they involve, explicitly or implicitly, the violation of...norms or standards of performance” (Neuman & Baron, 2005, p. 25). Regardless of nomenclature, most deviant behaviors can be categorized by their target: individuals or organizations (Berry, Ones, & Sackett, 2007). The former category includes violence, gossip, and theft from coworkers, while the latter includes working slowly, damaging company property, and sharing confidential company information (Berry et al., 2007; Sackett & DeVore, 2001). Such deviance is

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actually a syndrome of sorts whereby those who engage in one type of specific organizational deviance are more likely to engage in other types of organizationally targeted behaviors as well (Hogan & Hogan, 1989).

As a construct that is attracting increased research attention, organizational deviance traces its conceptual roots to job performance. Job performance is hierarchically structured with several sub-types of behaviors (Sackett & DeVore, 2001): (1) task performance, (2) organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and (3) counterproductive work behaviors or organizational deviance. Thus, organizational deviance is distinct from core task performance and OCBs (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002), but can still be thought of as a facet of job performance (Sackett & DeVore, 2001). Organizational deviance can be further understood using Robinson and Bennett's (1995) two-by-two typology of workplace deviance that utilizes two dichotomous dimensions: the target of the deviance (individuals versus organizations) and the severity of the act (mild versus severe). The current study focuses on organizational deviance as a narrowly measured aspect of job performance and makes no distinction regarding the severity of the act.

1.2. The role of personality in predicting deviant behavior

Research on correlates and antecedents of organizational deviance has primarily focused on broad personality traits as measured by the Big Five (Digman, 1990). Berry et al. (2007) meta-analyzed common broadly measured personality correlates of both individual deviance (ID) and organizational deviance (OD). They found that ID and OD are strongly correlated with each other ($\rho = .62$ after correcting for statistical artifacts), but that their relationship with common correlates is quite different. Specifically, they found that the Big Five personality traits relate differently to ID than they do to OD with, for example, conscientiousness being stronger in its relationship with OD ($\rho = -.42$) than with ID ($\rho = -.23$). By focusing on even more narrowly defined aspects of job performance, Salgado (2002) found that the meta-analytic relationship between the broadly measured Big Five and very specific forms of counterproductive work behavior was quite weak. For example, none of the Big Five traits was related to either absenteeism or accident rates, but conscientiousness and agreeableness were related to behaviors like theft, substance abuse, and rule breaking.

1.3. Conscientiousness

One of the most consistently important, broadly measured constructs in taxonomies of personality is conscientiousness. The measurement of conscientiousness has a long history in lexical models of personality (e.g. Allport, 1937; Cattell, 1943; Goldberg, 1981; Norman, 1963), which are based on the premise that common adjectival descriptors in various languages indicate a correspondence with the general importance of the descriptor across cultures (Saucier & Simonds, 2006). While recent reconceptualizations of the taxonomic structure have been undertaken (e.g. Ashton & Lee, 2008) by the inclusion of a sixth factor (Honesty/Humility), most trait theorists still take stock of the notion of a Big Five (Digman, 1990) set of traits: conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness-to-experience, neuroticism, and extroversion. Of these Big Five, broadly-measured conscientiousness has been meta-analytically determined to be the most valid personality trait in the prediction of broadly measured job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Conscientious persons are diligent, perseverant, and hard working, even when no one else is watching (Barrick & Mount, 1991, 1996). These facets of conscientiousness comprise a plethora of desirable characteristics in persons. Persons low in broadly measured conscientiousness are unlikely to perform their

jobs well and more likely to engage in maladaptive and narrowly measured behaviors like organizational deviance because they are low in diligence and perseverance and perhaps even hold disdain for hard work.

1.4. Entitlement

Entitlement is part of the constellation of narcissism. Narcissism in non-clinical populations is a second-order multi-dimensional construct characterized by the first-order facets of authority, exhibitionism, superiority, vanity, exploitativeness, self-sufficiency, and entitlement (Emmons, 1984, 1987). Narcissists with high levels of these facets often have feelings of omnipotence as well as grandiose self-conceptions (Raskin, Novacek, & Hogan, 1991). Of particular interest to the current study is the facet of entitlement. Entitlement has also been portrayed as part of the continuum of equity sensitivity (Huseman, Hatfield, & Miles, 1985, 1987), which is based upon equity theory (Adams, 1963, 1965). Equity sensitivity is a predisposition toward differing sensitivity (Huseman et al., 1987), tolerance (King, Miles, & Day, 1993), or preference (Sauley & Bedeian, 2000) for levels of unfairness in the workplace. Employees make an evaluation of fairness by comparing their perception of what they receive from their job (outcomes like pay, benefits, prestige, power, etc.) to what they bring to their job (inputs like effort, education, experience, skills, etc.) and then they compare this ratio to the perceived ratio of some referent other (Adams, 1963, 1965). As a disposition, equity sensitivity is independent of both time and context (King & Hinson, 1994; King et al., 1993).

The equity sensitivity continuum consists of benevolence on one end and entitlement on the other end, with equity sensitive individuals in the broad middle range. Entitled persons insist on a higher outcome-to-input ratio than their comparison other and believe that they deserve more of the proverbial pie than others regardless of actual performance, contribution, or effort (Miller, 2009). Entitled persons are prone to anxiety and typically dissatisfied with workplace policies, outcomes, and rewards (Miles, Hatfield, & Huseman, 1989). Given this predilection, equity theory (Adams, 1963, 1965) suggests that entitled persons are more likely to engage in behaviors designed to reduce the anxiety associated with perceived unfairness by insisting upon more rewards than others to whom they compare themselves; even engaging in deviant behaviors such as theft to offset their perception of under reward (Greenberg, 1990). Therefore, narrowly measured entitlement and narrowly measured organizational deviance should be positively related.

1.5. Aim and hypotheses

Conscientiousness is a broadly defined and measured trait while entitlement is narrowly defined and measured. Additionally, organizationally deviant behaviors are narrowly defined and measured. Conscientiousness and entitlement should be negatively and positively related, respectively, to organizational deviance. Additionally, because of the specificity matching principle (Epstein, 1979; Fleeson, 2004), it is suggested that the narrow trait of entitlement will be more strongly related to narrowly measured organizational deviance than will the broad trait of conscientiousness.

Hypothesis 1. There is a negative relationship between conscientiousness and organizational deviance.

Hypothesis 2. There is a positive relationship between entitlement and organizational deviance.

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