
The Influence of Workplace Spirituality on the Relationship between Organizational Justice, Leadership and Deviant Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

Purpose-*This paper examined the moderating influence of workplace spirituality on the relationship between organizational justice, leadership and workplace deviance. The purpose of this study is to propose a framework/model and state propositions to be tested empirically.*

Design/Methodology/Approach – *It is a conceptual review of the previous empirical studies on deviant workplace behaviour, organizational justice, leadership and workplace spirituality. The researchers searched for scholarly articles on the variables from Proquest direct, Science direct, and EBSCO host.*

Findings-*Drawing from social bonding theory and norms of reciprocity, we proposed that there is a positive correlation between organizational injustice (procedural and distributive injustices), unethical leadership behaviours and DWB. However, transformational leadership style has negative influence on deviance while transactional leadership style has positive impacts. Not minding the level of injustice and leadership styles, individual's level of spirituality moderates his involvement in deviant workplace behaviour.*

Practical Implications-*Managers and HR Practitioners need to be transparent in the procedures that lead to determination of rewards (pay, bonus, allowances and recognition) and need to be guided by the principles of equity, fairness, impartiality and transparency. Secondly, leaders need to 'live the talk' and encourage spirituality in the workplace.*

Originality/Value-*The paper extends the research on deviant workplace behaviours by proposing a framework that employed workplace spirituality as a moderator. However, there is need for empirical studies to test the proposed model.*

Paper Type: Review

Keywords: Workplace Deviance, Organizational Justice, Leadership and Workplace Spirituality.

INTRODUCTION

Deviant behaviour is a global phenomenon, prevailing in both private and public entities and is a key area of interest for academicians and practitioners. Deviant workplace behaviour (DWB) brings harmful implications to all stakeholders in organizations. Deviant behaviours impact

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negatively on organizations as previous studies showed that almost 75% of employees have engaged in workplace deviance like theft, fraud, vandalism, sabotage and voluntary absenteeism (Chirasha & Mahapa, 2012; Gross-Schaefer et al., 2000; Lawrence & Robinson, 2007) thereby limiting organizational productivity. DWB is a common and costly phenomenon for organizations (Robinson, 2008). Studies have shown that workplace deviance not only cost organizations substantial amount of money annually, but have negative and psychological consequences on employees as well (Aquino, Galperin, & Bennett, 2004; Berry, Carpenter, & Barratt, 2012; Lawrence & Robinson, 2007). For example, Hollinger and Adams (2010) reported that employee theft was responsible for about 45% of the United States retailers' inventory shortage in 2010 while it accounted for 43% in 2009. Although employee theft reduced to 34.5% in 2014, inventory shrink amounted to \$44 billion in losses for retailers in the United States (National Retail security Survey, 2015).

Also the Conference Board of Canada (2013) estimated that Canadian economy lost \$16.6 billion in 2012 due to workplace absenteeism, which is one of the forms of deviant behaviours at work (Conference board of Canada, 2013; Nguyen, 2013). Furthermore, targets of interpersonal deviance, such as harassment and bullying were found to report lower levels of organisational commitment (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011; Caza & Cortina, 2007; Kenny & Judd, 1984; Lim & Teo, 2009; Taylor, Bedeian, & Kluemper, 2012), lower levels of self-confidence (Yildiz, 2007; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990), increased absenteeism (Schaufeli, Bakker & Van-Rhenen, 2009), quitting work or intention to quit (Agnew, 1992; Babajide, 2010) and increased on-the-job drug use/abuse, among others (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011).

Limited studies have been undertaken to show the relationship between leadership and employee behaviour (Brown & Trevino, 2005, 2006; Tims et al., 2011; Pieterse et al., 2010), but leadership's impact on workplace deviance has not been given a fair attention. Therefore, the present study will add to the scanty literature on leadership and workplace deviance. Besides, the introduction of workplace spirituality as a moderator is a good contribution to fill contextual gap. This is because workplace spirituality has been studied in relation to employees' attitude to work, organizational performance, job satisfaction, job overload and work stress (Suleiman et al., 2013; Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002; Altaf & Awan, 2011). Different scholars have studied the antecedents of DWB to include organizational related factors, work related factors and personal factors (Alias, Rasdi, Ismail & Samah, 2013) but studies have ignored workplace spirituality as a factor that influences employees' behaviours in the workplace (James, Miles, &

Mullins, 2011). There are inadequate studies on the impact of workplace spirituality on behavioural outcomes of employees and organizational outcomes (Gupta, Kumar, & Singh, 2013; James, Miles, & Mullins, 2011; Duchon & Plowman, 2005), hence, this study will add to the limited literatures on workplace spirituality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Workplace Deviance

Employee deviant behaviour is a spontaneous behaviour of organizational members that violates the standard, policy or regulations of the organization and poses threats to the well-being of the whole organization or its members (Robinson & Greenberg, 1998). Also, Robinson and Bennett (1995) described it as a voluntary behaviour that breaks organizational norms significantly thereby threatens the well-being of an organization, its workforce or both. In a related vein, Kaplan (1975) described DWB as voluntary behaviours exhibited by employees when they become motivated to violate the expectations placed on them in organization due to lack of motivation to conform to normative expectations of the social setting they have found themselves. Also, Omar and Sulaiman (2013) described it as acts which violate performance standards as set by the organization, thereby resulting in harms to the organization and organizational members.

Furthermore, Omar, Zainah, Nasir, Halim, Kairudin and Farhadi (2011) described the concept as the deliberate or intentional desire to cause harm to an organization while in 2005, Lopez and Griffin affirmed that such behaviour is intentional, voluntary and it is not accidental behaviour. It is any act displayed by members of an organization that may likely cause harm and no benefit to the organization and organizational members (Marcus, Schuler, Quell & Humpfner, 2002; Marcus, 2001) while McCardle (2007) declared that such behaviour involves series of employee misbehaviours that deviate from organizational norms occasioned by dominant administrative bottlenecks. Also, DeVore (2001) defined DWB as any intentional behaviour on the part of an organizational member that is viewed by the organization as divergent and contrary to its valid or legitimate interests.

Organizational Justice

Organizational justice refers to the individual's and the group's perception of the fairness of treatment received from an organization and their behavioural reaction to such perceptions (Aryee, Budhwar, & Chen, 2002). The justice construct has developed and evolved over time as many researchers studied its four dimensions namely distributive justice, procedural justice, interpersonal justice and informational justice (Colquitt, 2001; Colquitt & Rodell, 2011). Distributive justice is explained as the perceived fairness of the rewards employees receive from the organization

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which must be fair and equitable while procedural justice describes the perceived fairness of the means and procedures used to determine those outcomes or rewards. Such means must have been made known to organizational members and must be agreed upon. It may be tied to performance, rank, equality or equity (Folger & Konovsky, 1989). Consequently, the present study deduced that perceived organizational injustice may lead to workplace deviance (i.e. positive relationship) especially when it is perceived to be unfair and inequitable (Colquitt, 2001; Bhatti, Alkahtani, Hassan & Sulaiman, 2015). Distributive justice perspective focuses on the fairness of the evaluations received relative to the work performed (Greenberg 1986) while Cropanzano et.al. (2007) distinguished three allocation rules that can lead to distributive justice if they are applied appropriately: equality (to each the same), equity (to each in accordance with his/her contributions), and need (to each in accordance with the most urgency). Distributive justice is concerned with the reality that not all workers are treated alike; the allocation of outcome is differentiated in the workplace (Cropanzano et al., 2001, 2007; Poole, 2007) and if this allocation is perceived as unfair, inequitable and biased, such may lead to manifestations of deviant behaviours in the workplace.

Relatedly, Hossam (2010) studied the relationship between organizational justice and work outcomes in UAE using 350 employees from five major organizations in Dubai. It was found that procedural justice was strongly related to organizational commitment than distributive justice. However, procedural justice was more strongly related to job satisfaction than distributive justice and job satisfaction partially mediated the influence of organizational justice on organizational commitment and turnover. Also, Nasir and Bashir (2012) studied workplace deviance in public sector organizations of Pakistan and found that there are multiple factors responsible for creating workplace deviance, such as financial pressures, lower job satisfaction, organizational injustice, organizational environment, and employee perception, but the most important factors out of these are organizational injustice and job dissatisfaction. Similarly, Ofoegbu (2013) studied impact of perceived organizational justice on organizational commitment in Nigeria using 215 employees of a beverage firm as sample. The study found that organizational justice has a significant impact on organizational commitment of the firm and showed that there was a significant relationship between distributive justice and perceived organizational commitment; hence if the distributive justice is perceived unfair, it may lead to deviant behaviours among the workforce.

Proposition 1: *Organizational injustice is positively related to deviant workplace behaviours*

Leadership

Leadership is a process of social influence. It is defined as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2007). The corporate scandals that have come to the general public's attention in the past years (such as Parmalat, HealthSouth, Enron, WorldCom, Tyco and Fannie Mae's accounting practices, HP and Deutsch Bank's spying accusations) have again highlighted the importance of the ethical conduct of those in influential positions. Much has been written about the normative or philosophical view of ethical leadership (Brown & Trevino, 2006; Eisenbeiss, 2012; Bass & Avolio, 1994). Yet, while organizations have started to express the importance of having leaders that behave ethically, ethical scandals are still common place (Stouten et al. 2012). Some CEOs and boards have exhibited unethical practices in a bid to satisfy the bidding of the stockholders, pressure to achieve better financial results and presence of fierce competition (Bello, 2012).

Furthermore, top executives of corporate organisations contributed to the recent credit crisis by making fraudulent decisions that artificially inflate profits, increase compensation to themselves and failure to make full disclosure in financial statements (Berenbeim, 2009; O'Connell & Bligh, 2009; Victor & Soutar, 2005). Most organizational leaders whose organizations failed had engaged in corruption, bribery, facilitation payments, discrimination, bullying, harassment, tax evasion and other unethical behaviours (Wesley, Basran, Hayward & Harris, 2011). Leaders are the keys in determining the outcome of organisational goals and to set the tone for employees' behaviour which may include promotion, appraisal and strategies (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). Also, organisational leaders should encourage employees by leading by examples; they have the responsibility to define organizational norms and values, live up to expectations and encourage their followers to adopt same.

Two major dimensions of leadership exist. Transformational leadership, which is process-oriented, improves employees' development and commitment through constructing vision, trust, expectation and suggestion (Bass, 1996). Transformational leaders regard employees as social men who have loyalty, independence, self-confidence and potential desire to change and realize themselves. Bass' transformational leadership includes charismatic influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration (Bass, 1996) while transactional leadership is based on individual self-interest philosophy. Managers and employees are considered to be individuals who are rational in pursuit of individual interests. It is just a pure trading relationship between them (Bass, 1996; Sergiovanni, 1990). Transactional leadership is result-oriented and only concerned about the short-term goals of the organization. Such leaders

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regard employees as “economic men” who have low quality and demand, work hard to obtain remuneration and care about the clarification of tasks and roles (Burns, 1978; Zhao, 2003). Furthermore, the norms of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) and social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) have gone to confirm that unethical behaviours of leaders towards employees will be reciprocated by the employees with misbehaviours. To a great extent, leader’s behaviour towards subordinates will over time affect subordinates’ attitudes and behaviours. In addition, the leader’s behaviour could cause employees to become both committed to the leader’s and the organization’s goals or act contrarily (McCann, Langford, & Rawlings, 2006; Shastri, Mishra, & Sinha, 2010). In order to minimize deviance in the workplace, organizations need ethical leaders. Brown, Trevino and Harrison (2005) defined ethical leadership as the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement and, decision-making.

Similarly, Pieterse, Van-Knippenberg, Schippers and Stam (2010) studied the moderating role of psychological empowerment on transformational and transactional leadership and innovative behaviour using 230 employees of a government agency in the Netherlands as sample; it was revealed that transformational leadership is positively related to innovative behaviour only when psychological empowerment is high. Also, leadership styles have been found to have a profound impact on organizational and personal behaviours/outcomes of the workers and organizations (Boerner, Eisenbeiss, & Griesser, 2007; Felfe & Schyns, 2004; Hater & Bass, 1988; Howell & Avolio, 1993; Ismail, Baizura, & Rabaah, 2009; Zhu, Chew, & Spangler., 2005). Specifically, studies have established a link between leadership behaviour and workplace misbehaviour (Bello, 2012; Brown & Treviño, 2006; Judge, LePine & Rich, 2006; Treviño & Brown, 2005).

Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986) states that individuals learn to behave through observing and imitating a role model. Individuals selectively choose a role model who is attractive, credible, and legitimate. Consistent with this theory, ethical leadership is likely to reduce subordinates’ deviant behaviours in two ways. First, ethical leaders in organizations play a guidance role in shaping subordinates’ behaviours. Ethical leaders occupy higher positions than subordinates and have power to make decisions on their subordinates’ behaviours. Moreover, ethical leaders often demonstrate care for the interests of their subordinates and treat them fairly. Because of these characteristics, ethical leaders are likely to be attractive, credible, and legitimate role models for subordinates to follow (Brown & Trevino, 2006). When noticing appropriate behaviour displayed by ethical leaders,

subordinates tend to emulate those behaviours. The more subordinates learn to behave appropriately from their ethical leaders the less likely they are to engage in deviant behaviour. Secondly, ethical leaders not only demonstrate ethical conduct themselves but also advocate such conduct by rewards and punishments (Brown et al., 2005). Ethical leaders reward their subordinates for appropriate behaviour and punish them for deviant behaviour. Over time, ethical leaders create outcome expectancies regarding appropriate and inappropriate behaviours (Detert et al., 2007) through the use of rewards and punishments. Since deviant behaviour is disciplined by ethical leaders, subordinates are more likely to refrain from such behaviours (Brown et al., 2005; Trevino et al., 2000).

Proposition 2: *Transformational leadership is negatively related to deviant work place behaviour while transactional leadership is positively related to deviant work place behaviour.*

Spirituality and Deviant Workplace Behaviour

Generally speaking, there has not been a consensus among scholars on the definition of workplace spirituality. Some have defined it from religious perspective, thinking that spirituality is same with religious practice while others have defined it using inner fulfilment and communal living as bases (Laabs, 1995; Brown, 2003; Mitroff, 2003). After much arguments scholars agreed that spirituality is different from the practice of religion; this distinction is important because the workplace is considered a secular environment, particularly in western societies (Ashar & Lane-Maher, 2004; Cacioppe, 2000; Hill & Smith, 2003; Mitroff & Denton, 1999). Ashmos and Duchon (2000) defined workplace spirituality as the recognition that employees have an inner life which nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work taking place in the context of a community while Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003) argued that it is a framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and Joy.

According to Gupta, Kumar, and Singh (2013) spirituality is about employees who have a common connection and togetherness with other colleagues in their work unit. Similarly, Harrington (2004) stated that spirituality is about employees sharing and experiencing some common attachments, attraction, and togetherness with each other within their work unit and the organization as a whole. Spirituality stimulates employees' honesty, creativity, commitment and personal fulfillment (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002). In furtherance to the above, Altaf and Awan (2011) studied the moderating effect of workplace spirituality on the relationship between job overload and job satisfaction using 76 respondents. Spirituality proved to have quite

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impact on job overload and job satisfaction. The spiritual paradigm essentially recognizes that people work not only with their hands, but also with their hearts and spirit (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). Spirituality leads to transformation of employees in the workplace. This implies addressing employees as whole human beings in terms of their emotions, mental, physical, and spiritual needs (Dehler & Welsh, 2003; Krahnke et al., 2003; Karakas, 2010). Furthermore, research has demonstrated that workplace spirituality reduces stress, enhances creativity, and improves problem solving (Tischler et al., 2002). By focusing on the spiritual qualities of meaningfulness and joy at work, organizations have found increased job satisfaction (Harung et al., 1996), enhanced job involvement, organizational identification, work rewards satisfaction (Kolodinsky et al., 2008), greater honesty, trust, and commitment (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002), and improved work performance (Duchon & Plowman, 2005).

According to Ashmos and Duchon (2000) there are seven dimensions of spirituality but three main dimensions are very crucial and noticed by many scholars, namely having a deep sense of purpose in one's work or meaningful work (individual level), having a deep connection to others or a sense of community (group level), and experiencing a strong sense of alignment with the organization's values i.e. organization level (Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2003; Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 1999; Mitroff & Denton, 1999). Also, it has the tendency to serve as a mechanism for controlling individual behaviour at work (James, Miles, & Mullins, 2011). Successful organizations such as Ford Motor Company, Toms of Maine, Hewlett-Packard (Burack, 1999), the World Bank (Laabs, 1995), DuPont, AT & T, Apple Computers, and Chase Manhattan Bank (Cavanagh, 1999), have created programs to bring spirituality to the workplace. For example, Hewlett-Packard builds spirituality in the workplace through a company philosophy that emphasizes the values of trust and mutual respect, which in turn contribute to cooperation and sharing a sense of purpose (Burack, 1999). Also, the perception of a strong team's sense of community can make people feel that they can satisfy their social, intimacy, and security needs, thus experiencing higher psychological well-being (Haller & Hadler, 2006; Burroughs & Eby, 1998; Christopher, Kuo, Abraham, Noel, & Linz, 2004; Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Furthermore, spirituality creates positive emotions which can result in more positive attitudes about work, development of higher affective and normative commitment (Milliman et al., 2003; Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999). Such effects, in turn, can translate into enhanced creativity, cooperative behaviours, and performance (Burroughs & Eby, 1998; Frederickson, 2001; Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004; Wright & Cropanzano, 2004). In part, this is

likely to happen because employees who feel socially supported and perceive that the organization promotes their happiness tend to reciprocate (Eisenberger et al., 2001; Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996; Gouldner, 1960) through stronger organizational affective bonds and feelings of loyalty toward the organization and this will translate to pro-social behaviour. Also, Chawla (2014) studied the effect of workplace spirituality on salespeople's organisational deviant behaviours and found that salespeople who have trust in their organisations will reciprocate by showing care for their organisation. This means that these salespeople will avoid deviant behaviours that harm the organisation. Moreover, Buchanan (1974) found that organisational trust results into psychological attachment with the organisation. And psychological attachment is negatively related to organisational deviant behaviours (Gill et al., 2011). Also, employees who experience meaningfulness at work hold their organisation in high regard (Pawar, 2009). Therefore, these employees will avoid causing harm to their organisation.

In addition, organisations promoting humanism also allows their employees to bring their whole selves (including spiritual self) to work (Dehler & Welsh, 1994). Such employees are likely to be more happy about their work and workplace (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000), and are found to have high commitment to their organisation (Pawar, 2009), and therefore they will not indulge in deviant behaviours that harm their organisation. Mount et al. (2006) in their study on counterproductive behaviours of customer service employees found that irresponsible employees are less likely to follow rules and more likely to evade their duties and withhold effort. Therefore, it is expected that organizations that promote the value of responsibility in their employees will have reduced organisational deviant behaviours. Also, empirical evidence exists that job satisfaction negatively affects employee's organisational deviant behaviours like absenteeism and theft (Bolin & Heatherly, 2001) but these unruly behaviours can be checked by workplace spirituality (Chawla, 2014).

McMillan and Chavis (1986) stated that feeling of community is a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together. In management literature, it is well accepted that organisations that fulfil spiritual need of membership/community attract higher organisational commitment from employees (Pawar, 2009; Vandenberghe, 2011). Employees with higher organisational commitment are likely to abide by organisational norms and less likely to engage in deviant workplace behaviours (Liao et al., 2004). Feeling of community increases organisational commitment and it is

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negatively associated with deviant behaviours. Also, feeling of community is found to increase job satisfaction among workforce (Chawla & Guda, 2010). In case of sales organisations, salespeople bringing their whole selves to work are likely to experience joy in work, work satisfaction, job commitment, reduced absenteeism and increased ethical behaviour. Salespeople from such organisations will avoid cheating their organisations by conducting deviant acts (Chawla, 2014; Badrinarayanan & Madhavaram, 2008). Generally, there is a link between the values framework of workplace spirituality (trust, responsibility, respect, receptivity, mutuality, justice, integrity, humanism, generativity and benevolence) and deviant workplace behaviours (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004). Based on the above empirical findings, an employee who experiences spirituality in the workplace will most likely not engage in workplace deviance (Ahmad & Omar, 2014) not minding the level of organizational injustice and (un)ethical behaviours of organizational leaders.

Proposition 3: *Employee's level of spirituality moderates the relationship between organizational injustice, unethical leadership behaviours and deviant work place behaviours*

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theory of Reciprocity

Norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) stressed that people reward kind actions and punish unkind ones. The theory takes into account that people evaluate the kindness of an action not only by its consequences but also by the intention underlying this action. In other word, people give back the kind of treatment they have received from their organization and it is a strong determining factor of human behaviour. Positive reciprocity occurs when an action committed by one individual that has a positive effect on someone else is returned with an action that has an approximately equal positive effect. Individuals expect actions to be reciprocated by actions that are approximately equal in value (Falk & Fischbacher, 2006). By implication any act of organizational injustice (procedural or distributive) melted out to employees and unethical behaviours displayed by the leaders will attract negative behaviours in return from employees. So, to avoid manifestations of deviant behaviours, the organizations need to imbibe the principles of equity, fairness, impartiality, just, transparency, unbiasedness, exemplary behaviours of leaders, reward for pro-social behaviours and elimination of toxic leaders/deviant employees.

Social Bonding Theory

Social bond theory otherwise known as social control theory (Hirschi, 1969) proposes that people's relationships, commitments, values, norms, and

beliefs encourage them not to break the law. Hirschi (1969) stated that elements of social bonding include attachment to families, commitment to social norms and institutions (school, employment), involvement in activities, and the belief that these things are important. Thus, if moral codes are internalized and individuals are tied into (social relationships like family, clubs, work unit/group, organizations) and have a stake in their wider community, they will voluntarily limit their propensity to commit deviant acts. The theory seeks to understand the ways in which it is possible to reduce the likelihood of deviance developing in individuals. It further states that human beings may choose to engage in a wide range of activities, unless the range is limited by the processes of bonding, socialization and social learning. Therefore, bonds to social institutions serve to reduce one's propensity for deviant behaviour. Hence, this theory posits that crime or deviance occurs when a bond is weakened, broken or not well established, then unusual behaviour for that individual may occur. When this attachment or bonding is strong, it reinforces an employee's purpose or meaningfulness of work (otherwise referred to as spirituality) which could in turn reduce deviant behaviour. This is because those who intend to retain their social bonds may likely refrain from deviant acts.

PROPOSED RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Research framework is a logical diagrammatic representation of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Hence, the moderating influence of workplace spirituality on the relationship between organizational justice, leadership and workplace deviance is depicted as follows:

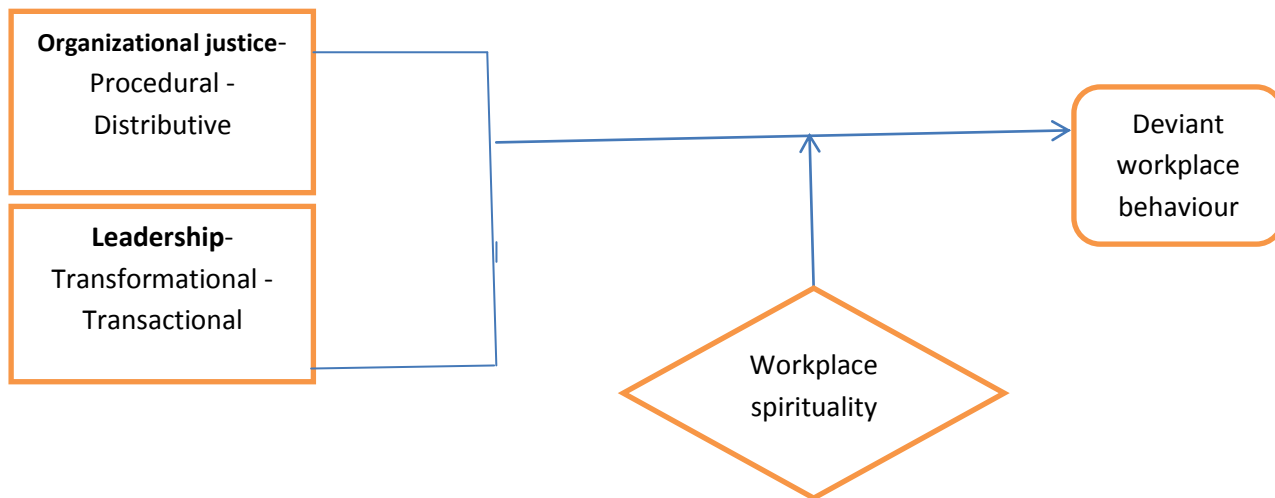


Fig.1. Proposed Framework

CONCLUSION

The study has shown the influence of workplace spirituality on organizational justice, leadership and workplace deviance. Furthermore, this study proposes workplace spirituality as a moderating variable and it is expected that the moderator will have a significant impact on the relationship between organizational justice, leadership and workplace deviance. This is because the level of individual spirituality determines his involvement/engagement in deviant work place behaviour. Also, this study has postulated that organizational injustice and unethical leadership behaviours have positive effect on workplace deviance. However, there is need to empirically test the proposed model in this study. Hence, there is need to build strong ethical climate, eliminate toxic leaders/deviant employees, and reward pro-social behaviour of employees.

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