# EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND WORKPLACE DEVIANCE IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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**Article Info:**

**Abstract:**

Employee involvement and its effect on organizational behavior have recently become a popular topic of inquiry. Many researchers have investigated the potential for enhancing employee attitudes, proactive contributions, and organizational performance. Concurrently, there has been increasing concern regarding workplace deviance, which includes behaviors that violate established norms. The emotional commitment and enthusiasm that define employee engagement are linked to job characteristics and organizational justice. These aspects bolster engagement within academic establishments, leading to a rise in job fulfillment and productivity. Conversely, workplace deviance, which encompasses production and interpersonal deviant behaviors, poses a significant challenge for educational institutions. Previous studies have revealed a negative correlation between employee engagement and workplace deviance, highlighting the potential of engaged employees to promote ethical principles and reduce deviant behaviors. Promoting organizational justice and fairness can further contribute to this positive relationship. This paper proposes a theoretical framework that utilizes questionnaires to evaluate employee engagement, job characteristics, organizational justice, and workplace deviance. The study targets employees with diverse roles within higher educational institutions, employing convenience sampling to elucidate the relationships between these constructs. The outcomes of this research can guide higher educational institutions in optimizing strategies for fostering employee engagement, enhancing organizational justice, and mitigating workplace deviance. Tailored interventions that address specific job characteristics and fairness perceptions can be designed to create a more harmonious and productive work environment. Policymakers and

administrators can also benefit from evidence-based policy development to promote engagement and address deviant behaviors within educational institutions. In conclusion, this conceptual paper emphasizes the importance of understanding the dynamics between employee engagement, job characteristics, organizational justice, and workplace deviance in higher educational institutions. It provides a foundation for further empirical research and offers practical insights to stakeholders in the field of education, contributing to a more conducive and prosperous educational environment.

**Keywords:**

Employee Engagement, Job Characteristics, Organizational Justice, Workplace Deviance, Educational Institutions

## Introduction

Employee engagement and its impact on organizational behavior have garnered substantial interest recently. Organizations recognize that engaged employees are likelier to exhibit positive attitudes, contribute proactively, and enhance overall organizational performance (Khusanova et al., 2021; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Robinson and Bennett (1995) simultaneously found that workplace deviance has emerged as a concern, encompassing behaviors that violate established norms and regulations within the organizational context. The primary objective of this study is to investigate the correlation between employee engagement and workplace deviance, thereby offering valuable insights into the potential of fostering employee engagement to mitigate deviant behaviors.

The modern workplace needs a heightened grasp of the various aspects that affect employee behavior. Huang et al. (2022) argue that employee engagement encompasses an individual's emotional connection, enthusiasm, and active participation in their job and the broader organizational context. Harter et al. (2002) discovered a significant positive association between employee engagement, their dedication to the organization's goals, and their inclination to exert high levels of effort. This phenomenon, in turn, leads to enhanced organizational performance. Furthermore, it is essential to acknowledge that employee engagement plays a pivotal role in cultivating a comprehensive feeling of well-being and job satisfaction among employees. According to Al-Suraihi et al. (2021), this phenomenon leads to decreased employee attrition rates and improved overall organizational effectiveness.

Nevertheless, in the pursuit of advantages driven by engagement, organizations must also confront the matter of workplace deviance. The breadth of deviant behaviors can vary, encompassing subtle behaviors such as disseminating unfavorable rumors and more overt criminal acts like theft or sabotage (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). These behaviors threaten the organization's cohesion and influence several aspects, such as productivity, morale, and overall effectiveness (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Consequently, exploring the relationship between employee engagement and its possible role in addressing such behaviors has been a significant area of focus in contemporary organizational research.

Within the field of organizational behavior, there exists a significant, although insufficiently investigated, domain concerning the correlation between employee engagement and workplace deviance. The intersection of actively involved employees who make exemplary contributions to the development of an organization with the growth of disruptive workplace deviances gives rise to relevant inquiries. What is the relationship between employee engagement and the

prevalence of workplace deviance? Can the promotion of active participation help reduce abnormal behaviors? These inquiries highlight the two-fold difficulties organizations encounter, effectively utilizing the promise of involvement while mitigating the threat posed by deviant behaviors. This study aims to elucidate the intricacies involved, providing valuable insights into the impact of employee engagement on workplace behaviors and the opportunities it presents for mitigating organizational disturbances.

This study aims to provide significant insights to organizations and practitioners interested in optimizing their employee engagement and behavior management strategies to accomplish the stated objectives. By examining the correlation between employee engagement and workplace deviance, organizations can get valuable insights to guide their decision-making process in implementing interventions that promote engagement. Consequently, these interventions can play a pivotal role in cultivating a pleasant work environment characterized by decreased occurrences of deviant behaviors.

## Literature Review

Employee engagement and workplace deviance have emerged as critical areas of interest within organizational research. Employee engagement, defined as employees' emotional commitment and enthusiasm towards their work and organization, has been identified as a potential solution to mitigate workplace deviant behaviors. Workplace deviance, encompassing behaviors that violate organizational norms and regulations, can disrupt harmony and impede overall performance. Organizations seek to understand the relationship between employee engagement and deviance to address these challenges, identify factors influencing both constructs and develop strategies to enhance engagement and reduce deviant behaviors.

### *Employee Engagement*

Employee engagement, a vital determinant of organizational success, is intricately woven with job characteristics and organizational justice. The relationship between these elements is pivotal in understanding how organizations can foster a committed and productive workforce. Job characteristics, encompassing autonomy, task variety, task significance, and feedback, profoundly impact employee engagement (Breaugh, 2021). Employees' engagement levels rise when they perceive their jobs as meaningful and challenging. Autonomy empowers employees, allowing them to take ownership of their tasks and fostering a sense of responsibility and commitment. Task variety prevents monotony, keeping employees motivated by offering novel challenges. Significance provides a sense of contribution, instilling a feeling of purpose. Regular feedback enhances performance and demonstrates that the organization values and invests in its employees' growth. These job characteristics, rooted in the Self-Determination Theory (Gagné et al., 2022), satisfy psychological needs, fueling intrinsic motivation and engagement.

Organizational justice, comprising distributive and procedural justice, is a critical underpinning for employee engagement (Tomar et al., 2020). Distributive justice pertains to the fairness of resource distribution, ensuring equitable treatment. Employees who perceive fairness are likelier to engage, as they trust their efforts will be rewarded justly. Procedural justice involves transparent decision-making processes where employees have a voice. When employees feel that decisions affecting them are made relatively, their commitment and engagement are bolstered. This is closely aligned with the principles of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), where job resources such as fairness act as drivers of engagement. The interplay between job characteristics and organizational justice creates a

symbiotic relationship. Positive job characteristics amplify the impact of organizational justice on engagement. For instance, employees in jobs with high autonomy can better appreciate the fairness of resource allocation as they experience a sense of control. Conversely, organizational justice enhances the effects of job characteristics on engagement. When employees perceive fair treatment, they are more likely to be engaged even when job demands are high.

### *Workplace Deviance*

Workplace deviant behavior involves actions that violate organizational norms and disrupt its functioning. Johnson (2011) highlights the negative correlation between workplace deviance and employee engagement. Deviant behaviors can be categorized into production and interpersonal deviance (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Production deviance involves actions such as purposely working slowly or wasting resources, while interpersonal deviance includes actions like harassment or verbal abuse. Adekanmbi and Ukpere (2021) extend this understanding by exploring the influence of frugality and materialism on deviant behaviors, particularly in Nigeria, where these factors are influenced by corruption and materialism.

### *Relationship between Employee Engagement and Workplace Deviance*

The relationship between employee engagement and workplace deviance is well-established. Engaged employees exhibit fewer deviant behaviors due to their heightened commitment to the organization and alignment with its values (Shantz et al., 2013). The Social Exchange Theory proposed by Blau (1964) claims that engaged employees respond to favorable treatment from the organization by reciprocating through adherence to its norms and avoidance of deviant behavior.

Furthermore, cultivating a more ethical workplace environment can be facilitated by increasing employee participation (Johnson, 2011). According to Macey and Schneider (2008), employees who are actively involved and committed to their work are more inclined to uphold ethical principles and disclose instances of wrongdoing. This behavior fosters a work environment characterized by responsibility and moral uprightness.
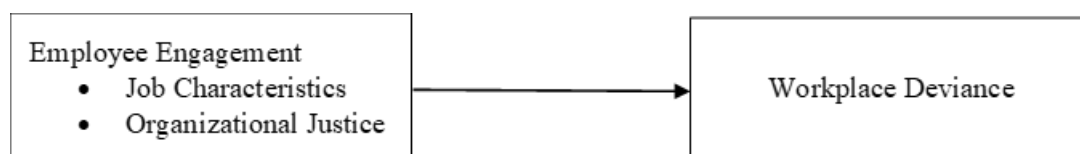
### *Proposed Research Framework*



**Figure 1: Proposed Research Framework**

Figure 1 shows the proposed research framework in this study, which investigates the relationship between employee engagement and workplace deviance. The proposed questionnaire consists of a total of 61 items measuring how the employee feels at work (17 items), job characteristics (6 items), organizational justice (19 items), and workplace deviance (19 items). All items are adopted and adapted as well as validated by previous studies: employee engagement (Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) by Schaufeli et al., (2002)), job characteristics (Job Diagnostic Survey by Hackman and Oldham's (1975)), organizational justice (The Organizational Justice Scale by Niehoff and Moorman (1993)) and workplace deviance (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). The study targets employees from diverse roles within higher educational institutions, such as lecturers, administrators, and support staff. Both public

and private educational institutions will be considered to ensure a representative sample. Due to practical limitations, the research will employ a convenience sampling method, inviting around 300 participants to participate.

## Practical Implications

One of the significant practical implications of the interplay between employee engagement, job characteristics, organizational justice, and workplace deviance is its potential impact on higher educational institutions and the broader field of education. The research can enhance employee engagement within higher educational institutions by identifying the critical job characteristics influencing engagement, such as autonomy, task variety, significance, and feedback. This can enable institutions to tailor their work environments to meet these needs better. For instance, providing educators and staff more autonomy and ensuring regular feedback mechanisms can boost their engagement levels. Higher levels of engagement can result in improved job performance and overall job satisfaction, as suggested by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004).

Besides that, the research findings related to organizational justice have important implications for educational institutions' policies and practices. Understanding that distributive justice (fair resource allocation) and procedural justice (transparent decision-making processes) positively influence employee engagement can guide institutions in promoting fairness and transparency. By implementing fair reward systems and involving employees in decision-making, institutions can foster a culture of justice that contributes to higher levels of engagement (Tomar et al., 2020). The study can aid educational institutions in addressing and mitigating workplace deviance by acknowledging the inverse relationship between employee engagement and workplace deviance (Johnson, 2011). Institutions can focus on strategies to boost engagement to reduce deviant behaviors. Engaged employees are more likely to uphold ethical principles and report instances of wrongdoing (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Therefore, promoting employee engagement can create a more ethical and harmonious work environment. In addition, the study can contribute to evidence-based policy-making within educational institutions by identifying key factors that influence employee engagement and workplace deviance. Policymakers and administrators can use the findings to create policies that prioritize job characteristics that positively influence engagement and discourage workplace deviance. Policies can be designed to ensure fair resource allocation and transparent decision-making processes.

Educational institutions can implement targeted strategies and policies based on a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing employee engagement and the effects of workplace misconduct, leading to a more productive and harmonious work ecosystem. Through a comprehensive grasp of the determinants of employee engagement and the impact of workplace impropriety, educational establishments can adopt laser-focused tactics and regulations designed to cultivate a more fruitful and amicable work ecosystem. These discoveries can redound to the benefit of educators, administrators, policymakers, and all invested parties in education, thereby contributing to the progression of pedagogical and learning processes.

## Conclusion

In the constantly evolving field of education, it is essential to understand the complex relationship between employee engagement, job characteristics, organizational justice, and workplace deviance. The present study has sought to examine the associations and possible

implications of these variables by employing a meticulously constructed questionnaire. This paper aims to investigate employee behaviors by studying individuals in various roles within public and private educational environments. This study will provide insights into the underlying factors that drive these behaviors. The study attempts to capture multidimensional aspects of employee feelings and behaviors by utilizing the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS), the Organizational Justice Scale, a modified version of the Interpersonal Deviance Scale, and the Production Deviance Scale.

The expected outcomes encompass positive correlations between job characteristics such as autonomy, task variety, significance, feedback, and employee engagement. Additionally, there are anticipated positive relationships between perceptions of organizational fairness, both distributive and procedural, and employee engagement. Moreover, it is expected that there is a negative relationship between employee engagement and workplace deviance. The anticipated results possess the capacity to provide significant insights for individuals in the field of education, including educators, administrators, and policymakers.

In addition, investigating workplace deviance in educational institutions has practical consequences for maintaining a peaceful and productive atmosphere. By examining the relationship between employee engagement and deviant behaviors, this study attempts to clarify the potential of engaged employees to demonstrate lower tendencies towards unproductive activities that disturb the educational ecosystem. Given the ongoing evolution of the educational landscape, the outcomes of this study have the potential to provide valuable insights for cultivating a conducive and prosperous environment for all parties engaged in the educational process.

**Acknowledgement**

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