A Conceptual link between perceived social norms, gender, and organizational deviance

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between perceived social norms and organizational deviance in the workplace, with a focus on the potential moderating role of gender. Organizational deviance refers to employee behaviors that deviate from accepted norms and standards, impacting organizational culture and productivity. Perceived social norms, the unwritten rules and behavioral expectations within a social group, play a pivotal role in shaping employee behavior. Extensive research has explored the influence of perceived social norms on various workplace behaviors, but its impact on organizational deviance and the role of gender as a moderator remain less explored. The theoretical foundation for this study is built on Robinson and Bennett's typology of deviant workplace behaviors and Kilduff and Day's research on self-monitoring and managerial careers. Theoretical implications suggest expanding existing theories on organizational deviance and group dynamics, while practical implications highlight the importance of promoting ethical workplace cultures and gender-inclusive interventions. Future research can delve deeper into the underlying mechanisms linking perceived group norms, gender, and organizational deviance, using qualitative and quantitative methods and longitudinal studies to establish causal relationships. Overall, understanding the interplay of perceived social norms and gender-related dynamics can contribute to the creation of healthier, more productive, and equitable work environments.

Keywords: perceived social norms, gender, organizational deviance, workplace deviance.

1 INTRODUCTION

Organizational deviance refers to employee behaviors that deviate from accepted workplace norms and standards, ranging from minor violations to more severe offenses. These behaviors can significantly affect employee morale, organizational culture, and overall performance, making it an essential area of interest for researchers and policymakers (Kura, 2016; Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Perceived social norms, also known as group norms referring to unwritten rules and behavioral expectations that individuals within a social group perceive as appropriate, play a crucial role in shaping employee behavior (Kilduff & Day, 1994). Employees often conform to these norms to gain acceptance and a sense of belonging within their respective groups, making the influence of perceived group norms on organizational deviance an essential research thinking.

Extensive research has explored the impact of perceived social norms on various workplace behaviors, such as job satisfaction, motivation, and performance (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Individuals tend to align their behaviors with perceived group norms to gain social validation and acceptance (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). Understanding how these norms influence organizational deviance is crucial for gaining insights into the underlying factors leading to deviant behaviors in the workplace.

Gender, as a fundamental social category, has consistently emerged as an influential factor in organizational behavior research (Turner et al., 1979). Men and women may experience and interpret workplace norms differently due to societal expectations, stereotypes, and role perceptions (Bandura, 1999). Consequently, gender differences in experiences and

interpretations could lead to distinct responses to perceived group norms, potentially affecting the manifestation of organizational deviance.

Examining gender-related differences in workplace behavior is particularly relevant in promoting gender diversity and equality (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Understanding how gender moderates the relationship between perceived group norms and organizational deviance can provide valuable insights into the complexities of workplace dynamics and inform strategies for fostering a more inclusive and harmonious work environment.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the relative influence of perceived group norms on organizational deviance and examine whether gender plays a moderating role in this relationship. To achieve this objective, we first develop a conceptual model and research propositions; section 2 reviews the theory and literature on the link between perceived group norms and organizational deviance, as well as the moderating role of gender on moderator on this relationship—finally, section 3 concludes with theoretical and practical implications for future research.

2.   CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND PROPOSITIONS

2.1   *Perceived social norms and organizational deviance*

Robinson and Bennett's (1995) study on deviant workplace behaviors offers a comprehensive typology, emphasizing the significance of understanding the factors contributing to organizational deviance. One crucial factor identified is the role of perceived group norms in shaping employee behaviors (Kura et al., 2013a, 2013b, 2013c; Kura, Shamsudin, et al., 2014; Shamsudin et al., 2014). Individuals tend to conform to these perceived norms to gain social acceptance and validation (Kilduff & Day, 1994), which, in turn, influences their propensity to engage in either compliant or deviant actions. Kilduff and Day's (1994) work on self-monitoring and managerial careers further supports this proposition, highlighting how individuals adjust their behaviors to align with perceived group norms. Employees are motivated to uphold the perceived norms within their social groups, impacting their choices regarding appropriate behavior within the organization. Consequently, aligning with group norms may lead to organizational deviance if the social group sees such behaviors as acceptable or tolerated.

In light of these findings, it can be inferred that perceived group norms play a vital role in influencing organizational deviance among employees. When individuals perceive that their group members endorse or tolerate certain behaviors, they are more likely to engage in them, either conforming to or deviating from the established norms (Kilduff & Day, 1994; Kura et al., 2013c; Robinson & Bennett, 1995). This postulation underscores the importance of understanding the dynamics of group norms in the workplace and their impact on employees' engagement in deviant actions (Kura et al., 2013a, 2013b, 2018). Based on the above discussion, we advanced the following proposition.

Therefore, the following propositions are advanced:

P1:   Perceived descriptive norms will be positively related to organizational deviance.
P2:   Perceived injunctive norms will be positively related to organizational deviance.

2.2   Potential role of gender as a moderator

Although men and women may engage in deviant workplace behaviors, prior research demonstrates gender differences in deviant behavior at work (Eagly & Steffen, 1986; Kura et al., 2015; Martinko et al., 2002). Social role theory (Eagly, 1987) has been applied in previous studies to examine gender differences in deviant behavior and related constructs. Social role theory postulates that men and women tend to behave differently in exhibiting deviant behavior at work (Eagly, 1987). Consistent with this theory, research suggests that men are more likely to engage in deviant behavior at work than women (Kura et al., 2013a; Martinko et al., 2002).

Furthermore, Prior research has examined gender as a moderator in studies regarding the antecedents and consequences of deviant behavior at work (Chen & Spector, 1992; Hitlan et al., 2006; Spector & Zhou, 2013). Theoretically, we argued that gender might moderate the relationship between perceived group norms and organizational deviance in several ways. (Spector & Zhou, 2013) justification of the interaction of gender in relationships between stressors and personality with counterproductive work behavior is adopted as the explanation for incorporating gender as a moderator in the present paper.

Gender, as a fundamental social category, maybe a significant moderator in the relationship between perceived group norms and organizational deviance among employees in the workplace. Existing research indicates that men and women may experience and interpret workplace norms differently due to societal expectations, stereotypes, and role perceptions (Eagly et al., 2003; Kura et al., 2016, 2019). Consequently, gender differences in response to perceived group norms could lead to variations in the manifestation of organizational deviance. Studies have shown that gender-related factors can influence how individuals respond to group norms and how much they adhere to or deviate from them (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). Eagly and Karau (2002) proposed the role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders, which suggests that gender stereotypes may shape perceptions of appropriate behavior for men and women in leadership positions. These stereotypes can influence how individuals conform to or challenge perceived group norms, particularly when those norms contradict gender-based expectations.

Moreover, the impact of gender as a moderator in the relationship between perceived group norms and organizational deviance may be influenced by the gender composition of the workgroup or team. Research by Ridgeway and Correll (2004) on the gender system highlights that gender beliefs and social relations are interconnected and can shape group dynamics. In workgroups with gender-homogeneous or gender-diverse compositions, the influence of perceived group norms on organizational deviance may vary, as group members may experience and interpret norms differently based on their gender-related experiences. Therefore, the following propositions are advanced:

P3:   Gender will moderate the positive relationship between perceived descriptive norms and organizational deviance, such that the relationship is stronger for men than women.

P4:   Gender will moderate the positive relationship between perceived injunctive norms and organizational deviance, such that the relationship is stronger for men than women.

3.   CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the proposition that perceived group norms significantly influence organizational deviance, with potential gender differences acting as a moderator, highlights the crucial role of group dynamics in shaping workplace behavior. The literature reviewed demonstrates the importance of understanding how individuals' perceptions of group norms influence their engagement in compliant or deviant actions within the organization.

Furthermore, this paper opens avenues for exploring the complexities of gender as a moderator in the relationship between perceived group norms and organizational deviance. Eagly and Karau's (2002) role congruity theory and Ridgeway and Correll's (2004) gender system framework can be starting points for future research to delve deeper into the interplay between gender-related expectations, group norms, and deviant behaviors. Investigating the role of gender composition in workgroups and teams can provide valuable insights into how gender diversity influences group dynamics and the manifestation of organizational deviance.

From a practical standpoint, understanding the influence of perceived group norms on organizational deviance has important implications for organizations aiming to foster an ethical work environment. Recognizing the significance of group dynamics can help leaders identify and address potential hotspots for deviant behavior within the organization. By actively promoting positive group norms that discourage deviant behaviors, organizations can create a culture that values ethical conduct and fosters employee well-being.

Additionally, considering the potential role of gender as a moderator is vital for developing gender-inclusive interventions and policies. Leaders and human resource practitioners should know the gender-related dynamics that may influence employees' responses to perceived group norms. Promoting gender equality and diversity initiatives can facilitate a more inclusive workplace culture that empowers all employees to contribute positively to the organization.

Future research endeavors can build on this proposition by exploring the underlying mechanisms linking perceived group norms, gender, and organizational deviance. Qualitative and quantitative studies can investigate how gender-related experiences and expectations shape individuals' perceptions of group norms and subsequent behavior within diverse work environments. Overall, an in-depth exploration of the theoretical implications of perceived group norms and gender-related dynamics in organizational deviance is essential for creating healthier, more productive, and equitable work environments in the future.

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