

Dimensions of Deviant Workplace Behavior in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

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Abstract

The present study aims at identifying some dimensions of deviant workplace behavior, for this purpose being conducted a survey in small and medium-sized enterprises in Bucharest. In structuring the objectives of this research, the starting point was a typology of deviant workplace behavior drawn from the literature review. Study findings showed that the most probable forms of deviant workplace behavior category would be those of the production deviance. The most frequently mentioned forms of deviant workplace behavior that employees have noticed at their colleagues are: spreading rumors and gossiping and great prolongation of breaks during working hours. Regarding the adoption of some forms of deviant behavior by themselves, most employees said they have not acted in this manner. Starting from the initial model concerning deviant workplace behavior typology, the intensity of manifestation of each form of behavior of employees and managers of small and medium-sized enterprises in Bucharest was evaluated.

Keywords: *deviant workplace behavior, typology of workplace deviance, employee deviance, counterproductive behavior, organizational behavior*

JEL classification: M14, L21

1. Introduction

The deviant workplace behavior (DWB) has become nowadays one of the major issues in corporate life, both as a result of undesirable economic consequences at the level of the organization and social and psychological effects that they generate on its social system. Consequently, DWB has become one of the major research topics. Although at international level the phenomenon started to be studied a few decades ago (scientific production being reduced at first, but becoming more consistent at present), however, we are not facing with a common

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theme. Moreover, not too many of such studies are to be found in the Romanian specialized literature. Chraif and Aniței (2011) examine the impact of economic crisis on the counterproductive behavior of employees in food and beverage restaurant chain from Romania, showing that the dimension of absenteeism and fluctuation has been reduced, as a result of the onset of economic crisis, but the level of concern about future has increased with all the unwanted psychological consequences arising from here.

According to Oxford Dictionaries (n.d.), 'deviated' as a verb refers to 'depart from usual or accepted standards'. In line with this definition, there were several early attempts to describe and classify deviant behavior of employees in relation to the rules of the organization.

Thus, Mangione and Quinn (1975) delimited two types of deviance: *counterproductive behavior*, characterized by the intention of destroying the property of the employer, and *doing little on the job*, referring to obtaining results in a smaller quantity and lower quality than normally, and Wheeler showed in 1976 that there are serious and minor violations of the organization rules. In 1989, Redeker drew up a list of offenses that should be made punishable.

The above studies have focused on DWB directed against the organization / employer, without any reference to dysfunctional behaviors directed against the organization's employees. This limitation was noticed by Robinson and Bennett (1995) who also introduced in the analysis the interpersonal issues. The typology resulting from the statistical analysis of the data collected for this purpose was based on two major dimensions: the type of the envisaged target (organization or individual) and the severity of the deviant behavior (minor or serious) (Vardi & Weitz, 2004).

The two dimensions generate four quadrants that classify the types of deviant workplace behavior. The first quadrant refers to the production deviance and includes less severe behavior directed against the organization, while the second quadrant, property deviance, includes behaviors which are serious and directed as well against the organization.

Quadrants three and four include behaviors directed towards individuals in the organization, quadrant three containing the minor ones (political deviance) and quadrant four the most serious ones (personal aggression) (Bazaraite & Coubaneichvili, 2008).

In 2000, Bennett and Robinson have developed and validated a measuring instrument of DWB that they called the Workplace Deviance Scale. Neff (2009) considers that Robinson and Bennett's model, based on two factors, is more suitable than a single factor based model. The conclusion is founded on the multitude of research subsequent to the establishment of Robinson and Bennett's model. Thus, Appelbaum, Iacone, and Matousek (2007) appreciate that Robinson and Bennett (1995) typology can be used to classify deviant behaviors in accordance with the organizational climate. Other authors, starting from the same typology, have used four attitudinal variables (theft approval, company contempt, intent to quit, and dissatisfaction) to predict four types of employee deviant

behavior (absenteeism, substance abuse, privilege abuse, and theft). It was concluded that “each attitude has a specific and stable pattern of relationships with the four types of deviance” (Bolin & Heatherly, 2001, 405). Litzky, Eddleston, and Kidder (2006) analyze the consequences on the organization of the four types of deviant behavior. In the same year, Shamsudin (2006, p. 62) motivated the choice of Robinson and Bennett's model “because it is recognized as providing the basis for later development of other typologies”.

Thus, some researchers have studied the relationship between procedural justice and DWB in both dimensions, organizational (DWBO) and interpersonal (DWBI) (Zoghbi Manrique de Lara, Verano Tacoronte, & Ting-Ming Ding, 2012). Deckop, Cirka and Andersson (2003) analyze the motivation of reciprocal behavior between employees and conclude that a negative behavior generates another, a fact that they have called *vicious cycle*. Another study reiterates that managers tend to behave inappropriately to a greater extent with women subordinates or minorities (Hodson, 2002). Hornstein (2003) presents a similar thesis when he states that managers behave inappropriately with subordinates only to stay in *The Boss Club*. Pearson, Andersson and Wegner (2001) argue that while aggression is usually intentional in the case of uncivilized behavior it is not always clear whether the instigator has deliberately tried to harm.

Other reasons may be related to fear or shame. When they are afraid, people often become defensive or anxious, and when it comes to shame, they often resort to aggression in order to restore dignity (Neuman & Keashly, 2010).

Last but not least, Schiopu (2014 a, 2014b) noted that the deviant work behavior may be associated with the degree to which the employees need to regulate their emotions or to the emotional labor. This management of emotion may lead to emotional dissonance or a difference between the felt and displayed emotion, which may be related to some forms of negative behavior such as neglecting directions, slower and ineffective actions.

2. Research methodology

In the present study two exploratory researches were carried out aimed at identifying dimensions of deviant workplace behavior of managers and employees within small and medium enterprises in Bucharest.

The starting point was Robinson and Bennett's (1995) typology of deviant workplace behavior in structuring the objectives. The questions were formulated according to the four quadrants which also included forms of behavior drawn from studies regarding local socio-cultural features, having as result the following categories, as shown in Figura 1.

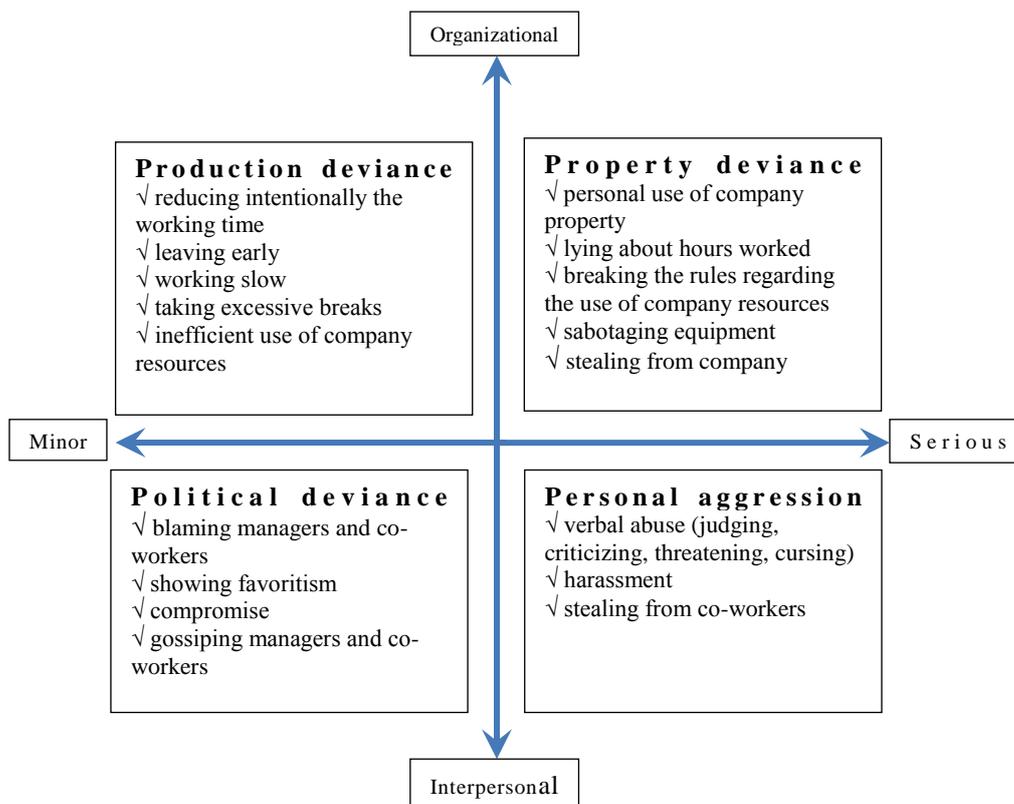


Figure 1. Researched dimensions of deviant workplace behavior (starting from Robinson and Bennett's typology, 1995)

In order to identify forms of deviant behavior, the subjects were asked to describe their attitudes and behavior towards certain situations such as: private use of company property, resigning shortly from the current job, the frustration generated by the wage inequity at workplace, success in business, the existence of strict rules in the company, interaction in different situations with managers / subordinates / colleagues. Another set of questions aimed at indicating behaviors observed among colleagues.

The research method was the survey, the targeted collectivity being represented by managers and employees of small and medium enterprises in Bucharest. Sampling was conducted by using the snowball sampling method, resulting in a sample of 65 managers and respectively 270 employees of the same companies. Each sample was given a distinct questionnaire, tailored to the respondent's position in the organization. Data was collected by using closed and mixed questions with one or more possible answers, and scales of attitude measurement (Likert's scale).

Within the sample of managers, 70% are men and 30% women, 90% of them having graduate and post-graduate studies. The second sample of the 270 employees had the following structure: 43% male and 57% female, 66% with graduate and post-graduate studies. The structure by age groups was as follows in Table 1:

Table 1. The structure by age groups of employees

Age (years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 26	59	22
26-30	71	26
31-40	53	20
41-50	58	22
Over 50	28	10
Total	270	100

Analysis was performed by using SPSS 20.0 software. The aim was to assess both indicators of central tendency and statistical significance of the differences in attitude and behavior between the two categories of respondents.

3. Findings and Discussion

In this section we present the main forms of deviant behavior found in small and medium enterprises in Bucharest.

Regarding the predisposition for **personal use of company property** without permission, this is not found significantly, neither among managers nor employees. Thus, 45.3% of managers totally disagree with such practice, while 31.3% agree. At the level of employees the total disagreement position is at the level of 33% of them, and the one of disagreement at a rate of 44.1%. Regarding the favorable assessment, a percentage of approximately 9% of employees, managers respectively agree with this practice, with small differences with regard to the intensity of such attitudes (Table 2).

Using Likert's scale from 1-Strongly disagree, to 5 - Strongly agree, the average of evaluation for managers is 1,906 and the one for employees is 2, indicating disapproval of the personal use of company property.

Furthermore, the Student test has the value $t = 0.83$, for a level of significance $p > 0.1$, indicating lack of statistical significance of the differences between the two groups regarding the analyzed variable.

Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.875, with a level of significance of 0.05, and one could conclude that managers' views are very similar to those of employees in terms of attitudes towards personal use of company property.

Table 2. Attitude towards the personal use of company property (%)

Attitude	Employees	Managers
Strongly disagree	33.0	45.3
Disagree	44.1	31.3
Neutral	14.0	14.1
Agree	7.8	6.3
Strongly agree	1.1	3.1
Total	100.0	100.0

One can notice a slight disapproval tendency of this behavior, with age, but the value of chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 24.43$, d.f. = 16) has a significance level of $p = 0.081$.

In case they **intended to resign from the current job**, both managers and employees state that they would not change their behavior at workplace (83.1% of managers and 84.8% of employees). At the opposite pole, 6.2% of managers and 13.3% of employees would reduce working time by leaving early from work or taking some days off, under the pretext that they are sick, and 3.1%, and 1.9% respectively of them would undue appropriate some of the consumables (paper, pens and other office products) of the company (Table 3). Differences of opinion between the two groups of subjects are not significant, $t = 0.069$, $p > 0.1$.

Table 3. Behavior in the event of resignation from current job (%)

Behavior	Employees	Managers
Undue appropriation of consumables	1.9	3.1
Reduction of working time	13.3	6.2
Maintenance of workplace behavior	84.8	83.1

In the event of **frustrations** occurrence due to dissatisfaction at workplace generated by non-recognition of merits, most of the employees (56.7%) would manage the situation without complaining and without seeking any help. A percentage of 29.6% of them are trying to create a circle of friends at work to support them, while 9.3% are trying to defend themselves, by jeering at those whom they consider to be guilty and 8.9% are complaining to colleagues about the boss who treats them unjustly. The lowest percentage (4.4%) is held by those who adopt an extreme behavior, characterized by verbal aggression (even curses), trying to make everyone understand that they cannot override them (Table 4).

Table 4. Ways of expressing frustration at workplace (%)

Behavior	Percentage (%)
Complaining to colleagues about the boss	8.9
Creating a circle of friend to support them	29.6
Extreme behavior, characterized by verbal aggression	4.4
Ironizing the boss	9.3
Accepting the situation without complaining	56.7

If there are colleagues who lie about worked hours, most of the employees (65.9%) claim to know nothing while only 19.7% report this to superiors and 14.4% are sympathetic to the group (Table 5).

Table 5. Attitude towards lying about worked hours (%)

Behavior	Percentage (%)
Reporting the matter to superiors	19.7
Claiming not knowing anything	65.9
Sympathizing	14.4
Total	100.0

When work **related tasks are completed before the end of the official working program**, most of the employees (30.6%) prefer to engage in discussions with colleagues, 27.2% to leave early from work, and 11.9% to work in personal interest; the remaining 30.2% find other concerns about the job (Table 6).

Table 6. Behavior in the event of completing tasks before the end of program

Behavior	Employees (%)	Managers (%)
Leaving early	27.2	49.2
Working in personal interest	11.9	3.2
Discussing with colleagues	30.6	17.5
Other job related concerns	30.2	30.2
Total	100.0	100.0

Seen from the perspective of managers, employees' behavior in the event of completing tasks before the end of the program is perceived differently. Most of them (49.2%) agree that subordinates leave work early, while 17.5% allow them to engage in discussions with colleagues; 30.2% expect employees to perform other activities in the interest of the organization and only 3.2% allow them to work in

personal interest. The differences of opinion between managers and employees are significant, the value of t test is 2.294 for $p < 0.05$.

Employee behavior is influenced by age and gender (Table 7); persons aged over 50 years assume in a greater proportion other tasks related to work (53.6%) and are less concerned with engaging in performing activities in personal interest (3.6%). These differences are significant, $\chi^2 = 21.63$, d.f. = 12, $p < 0.05$. Women are more oriented to finding other work-related concerns and to respect working hours than men ($\chi^2 = 6.405$, d.f. = 3, $p < 0.1$)

Table 7. Age and gender differences in the behavior adopted in the event of tasks completion before the end of program (%)

Behavior	Under 26	26 -30	31-40	41-50	Over 50	Men	Women
Leaving early	25.9	25.4	28.8	27.6	28.6	34.2	22.1
Working in personal interest	17.2	18.3	13.5	1.7	3.6	12.3	11.7
Discussing with colleagues	31.0	26.8	34.6	39.7	14.3	29.8	31.2
Other job related concerns	25.9	29.6	23.1	31.0	53.6	23.7	35.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

If faced with an **increase of salary to a colleague with less experience** and a lower level of training, many employees disagree (34.6%) or strongly disagree (21.6%) manifestation of a counterproductive behavior (reducing work efficiency, longer breaks, breaking the rules of company). Agreement with such behavior was expressed by 11.9% of employees and total agreement only by 2.2% of them (Table 8). The average of appreciation on a Likert scale from 1-Strongly disagree to 5-Strongly agree was 2.383, rather indicating disapproval attitude of such behavior.

Table 8. Inefficient workplace behavior due to the lack of boss appreciation

Attitude	Percentage (%)
Strongly disagree	21.6
Disagree	34.9
Neither-nor	29.4
Agree	11.9
Strongly agree	2.2
Total	100.0

Reaction to this situation is influenced by the socio-demographic variables: age, gender, educational level. People aged over 50 are more likely to adopt a counterproductive behavior when they feel demotivated by salary inequity ($\chi^2 = 32.87$, d.f. = 16, $p < .05$). As regards to gender differences, women resign themselves to the situation, not engaging in manifest behaviors ($\chi^2 = 8.074$, d.f. = 4, $p < .05$). Persons with university and post-graduate studies tolerate in greater extent such inequalities, the differences from the other categories of studies being significant ($\chi^2 = 51.52$, d.f. = 16, $p < .05$).

If they had to work in a company with a **clear organizational structure that strongly emphasizes rules and regulations**, almost half of employees would agree the situation, 23.7% would be indifferent and 28% would feel uncomfortable (Table 9). The average of appreciation is 3.291, which shows disposition to work in an organization with clear rules and organizational structure.

Table 9. Pleasure of working in a company that emphasizes rules and regulations

Attitude	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	15.2
Agree	33.0
Neutral	23.7
Disagree	21.9
Strongly disagree	6.2
Total	100.0

The extent to which **managers' lack of competence** leads employees to break company rules is small, only 7.1% stating that they would try to use the situation for their benefit, and 23.3% not totally excluding this possibility. Most employees do not think they will break the rules more often, as long as managers' hesitation does not affect them personally (36.1%), and 33.5% say they will not act unethically in any circumstances (Table 10).

Table 10. Violations of company rules when bosses are hesitant about making decisions

Behavior	Percentage (%)
I would try to use the insecurity situation to a certain extent	7.1
I am not sure I would use the situation to break the rules	23.3
I don't think I would break the rules more often	36.1
Under no circumstances shall I break the rules	33.5
Total	100.0

When asked about **deviant behaviors** that they have **noticed at colleagues**, employees indicated spreading rumors and gossiping with the highest frequency (52.5%), followed by excessive breaks (41.76%), intentionally working slow (39.85%) and leaving early / arriving later at work (38.55%). The least indicated forms of counterproductive behavior are stealing from co-workers (3.4%), harassment (3.8%) and sabotaging the interests of the company (4.6%). The detailed situation of answers is found in Table 11.

Regarding the same forms of behavior noticed at subordinates, managers indicated on the first place intentionally slowing down working rhythm (48.44%), followed by spreading rumors and gossiping (45.3%), large breaks (43.75%) and, with equal percentages (35.9%), leaving early / arriving later at work, respectively spreading company resources. Managers did not indicate any case of harassment or stealing from colleagues and rarely did they observe behaviors such as sabotaging the interests of the company (6.25%) and blaming co-workers (7.81%).

Ranking the occurrence frequencies of the 13 forms of deviant behavior observed by employees and managers, the correlation coefficients of Kendall's rank ($\tau = 0.876$, $p < 0.01$) and Spearman ($\rho = 0.957$, $p < 0.01$) indicate approximately the same order.

Table 11. Forms of deviant behavior noticed by employees and managers

Behavior noticed at	Co-workers (%)	Subordinates (%)	t Test	Level of signification
Leaving early /arriving later at work	38.55	35.9	0.385	p>0.1
Taking excessive breaks	41.76	43.75	0.284	p>0.1
Intentionally reducing working rhythm	39.85	48.44	1.093	p>0.1
Inefficient use of company resources	22.9	35.9	2.137	p<0.05
Sabotaging equipment	4.6	6.25	0.546	p>0.1
Lying about hours worked	19.5	21.88	0.417	p>0.1
Stealing from company	6.9	7.81	0.255	p>0.1
Showing favoritism	23.4	9.38	2.497	p<0.05
Spreading rumors and gossiping	52.5	45.3	1.028	p>0.1
Blaming co-workers	11.1	7.81	0.771	p>0.1
Harassment	3.8	0.00	1.592	p>0.1
Verbal abuse	15.33	9.38	1.223	p>0.1
Stealing from co-workers	3.4	0.00	1.507	p>0.1

However, there are two situations in which employees and managers' perceptions of deviant behaviors incidence differ significantly. The first is represented by inefficient use of company resources, considered by managers to be more widespread than employees estimate ($t = 2.137, p < .05$). The other situation concerns favoritism, that employees consider to be more practiced than managers asses ($t = 2.497, p < .05$).

Regarding the adoption of one or more forms of behavior by themselves, only 35.5% of employees answered affirmatively, most of them saying that in no case have they adopted any of the listed behaviors (Table 12).

Table 12. Extent to which employees manifested deviant workplace behavior

Acquired behavior	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Rather alone, unknown by anyone	50	18.5
Led by other co-worker	46	17.0
Neither of the behavior above	174	64.5
Total	270	100.0

Employees have adopted one or more of the indicated forms of deviant behavior both at the advice of colleagues, and on their own initiative. The most practiced form is leaving early / arriving later at work, manifested alone rather than at the urging and together with colleagues (Table 13).

Table 13. DWB forms manifested by employees themselves

Manifested behavior	% of employees that manifested DWB		% of total employees	
	Alone	With co-workers	Alone	With co-workers
Leaving early /arriving later at work	54.0	43.5	10.0	7.4
Taking excessive breaks	12.0	28.3	2.2	4.8
Intentionally reducing working rhythm	10.0	10.9	1.9	1.9
Lying about hours worked	2.0	2.2	0.4	0.4
Stealing from company	2.0	0.0	0.4	0.0
Showing favoritism	4.0	2.2	0.7	0.4
Spreading rumors and gossiping	0.0	10.9	0.0	1.9
Harassment	0,0	2.2	0.0	0.4
Stealing from co-workers	2.0	0.0	0.4	0.0

Of the behaviors practiced in group, we notice taking excessive breaks and spreading rumors and gossiping.

The **general perception towards business** is significantly different between managers and employees. Thus, most of the managers (51.6%) state that businesses are honest, follow all the rules and the regulations required, competition not being a factor to determine them to breach them, common opinion at the level of 31.5% of employees, too. In an approximately equal percentage, other employees (31.9%) believe that businesses are a world of sharks, where each swallows the other, regardless of price, opinion shared by only 14.5% of managers (Table 14). The possibility of making certain sacrifices or to use illegal means to achieve a goal is taken into account in close proportion by managers (21%) and employees (25.9%), while 10.7% of employees and 12.9 % of managers consider violation of the rules is justified only in the case of survival problems. As regards the differences of opinion between the two groups of subjects, they are significant, $t = 3.304$, for a significance level of $p = 0.001$.

Table 14. Perceptions regarding businesses among managers and employees (%)

Perception	Employees	Managers
Businesses are a world of sharks, where each swallows the other, regardless of price	31.9	14.5
Sometimes you need to make some sacrifices / use illegal means in order to achieve your goal	25.9	21.0
I can breach rules in order to achieve my goal in the case of a survival problem	10.7	12.9
Businesses are honest, following all necessary rules	31.5	51.6
Total	100.0	100.0

Employees' attitude towards business is influenced by the socio-demographic variables age and gender. Thus, people over 40, consider in a greater extent that businesses are honest, while those under 40 are more willing to make compromises and break the rules to the objective pursued in business (Table 15). Chi-square test confirms this difference, $\chi^2 = 22.87$, d.f. = 12, $p < 0.05$. The view that businesses are a world of sharks is found in a larger extent among women (37.4% vs. 27% men), the women being less inclined to break the rules in business.

Table 15. Age and gender differences in employees' perception of businesses (%)

Perception	Under 26	26 -30	31-40	41-50	Over 50	Men	Women
Businesses are a world of sharks, where each swallows the other, regardless of price	33.9	32.4	34.0	24.1	35.7	28.7	34.2

Perception	Under 26	26 -30	31-40	41-50	Over 50	Men	Women
Sometimes you need to make some sacrifices / use illegal means in order to achieve your goal	25.4	39.4	20.8	19.0	17.9	35.7	18.7
I can breach rules in order to achieve my goal in the case of a survival problem	15.3	8.5	15.1	6.9	7.1	12.2	9.7
Businesses are honest, following all necessary rules	25.4	19.7	30.2	50.0	39.3	23.5	37.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Synthesizing employees' responses, it is noted that DWB forms have different manifestation incidence, which was symbolized as follows: + + + major incidence; + + average incidence; + low incidence. With "-" there were indicated forms that were not encountered during the research. Thus, Robinson and Bennett's DWB typology (1995) acquires, within SMEs in Bucharest, the following features, as shown in Figure 2.

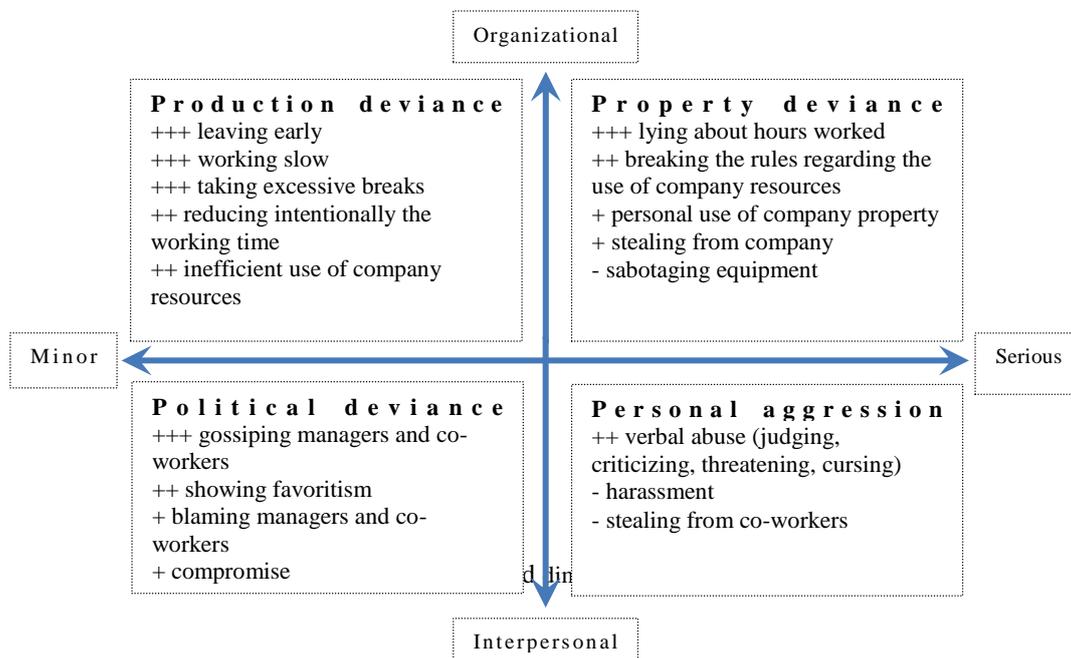


Figure 2 Obtained dimensions of DWB

A first observation is that most behaviors are minor and are manifested particularly towards the organization, being included in the category of production deviance.

Also in the minor category, but manifested towards the company employees are political deviance behaviors type, with particular highlighting of spreading rumors and gossiping. In the category of property deviance, lying about hours worked stands out and the category personal aggression is poorly represented. It is noted that sabotaging equipment, harassment, stealing from co-workers are not part of the behaviors practiced by employees of SMEs in Bucharest.

4. Conclusions

The present paper has tackled one of the major topics of this research, given the consequences that DWB has at organizational and interpersonal level. This research is among the first to address this issue in Romania, taking the form of an exploratory study conducted in SMEs in Bucharest.

Research plan started from the model proposed by Robinson and Bennett (1995), who was adjusted according to certain features considered as belonging to local culture, as reflected in the specialized literature. This initial model is presented in Figure 1. The first part of the research identifies the inclination to adopt a certain behavior in hypothetical situations through which the respondents indicated the answers that best matched with their convictions.

The main findings of this section were that the most likely forms of DWB would be: leaving early, intentionally reducing working time, lying about hours worked, discussing with colleagues before the end of working-day, creating a circle of friends on which to rely in case they would feel treated unjustly by superiors, breach of rules regarding the use of company resources and blaming managers and co-workers.

As for the reasons that would determine employees to adopt one or more forms of DWB, note that non-recognition of merits does not significantly influence the behavior of 56.7% of employees and managers' incompetence does not affect nearly 70% of employees. In contrast, if some colleagues lied about hours worked, 66% of employees would pretend to know nothing about this.

The most frequently mentioned forms of DWB that employees have noticed at their colleagues are spreading rumors and gossiping with the highest frequency and great prolongation of breaks during working hours. Managers indicated on the first place intentionally slowing down working rhythm, followed by spreading rumors and gossiping, overall the opinions of the two categories of respondents being similar.

Regarding the adoption of one or more forms of behavior by themselves, most employees said that under no circumstances have they adopted any of the behaviors indicated. Of those who admitted to have practiced one or more forms of DWB, most of them left early / arrived later at work.

Starting from the initial model of DWB typology, the intensity of expression of each form of behavior was evaluated at the level of employees and managers of SMEs in Bucharest. Most of the observed behaviors are minor and are manifested particularly towards the organization, being included in the category of production deviance. Those that have major incidence are: leaving early, working slow, and taking excessive breaks. In the category of political deviance, it is particularly noted the spread of rumors and gossip and in the category of property deviance, lying about hours worked. Severe deviant behaviors directed against co-workers are rarely encountered.

The main limitation of the research is represented by the small size of the sample composed of managers, but the research was primarily focused on employee behavior. In future studies, assessment of DWB at the level of the entire country will be analyzed, in order to identify any differences by geographic areas.

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