Poster
TITLE
The effects of self-efficacy, perceptions of ethical misconduct, and guilt-proneness on CWBs

ABSTRACT
This study examined the relationship between generalized self-efficacy, perceptions of ethical misconduct, guilt-proneness, and counterproductive work behaviors. We first hypothesized that self-efficacy would be negatively related to counterproductive work behaviors. Secondly, we hypothesized that perceptions of ethical misconduct and levels of guilt-proneness would mediate the negative relationship between generalized self-efficacy and counterproductive work behaviors. We surveyed 190 undergraduate students. To test our hypotheses, we used serial mediation (self-efficacy $\rightarrow$ perceptions of ethical misconduct $\rightarrow$ Guilt $\rightarrow$ CWBs). Results supported our first hypothesis. However, we did not find support for the mediated relationship proposed in our second hypothesis.

Self-efficacy and CWBs: Perceptions of ethical misconduct and guilt-proneness as mediators

According to the Ethics Resource Center (2014), nearly two-thirds of ethical misconduct in the workplace are not isolated events but instead are recurring behaviors. Furthermore, up to 60% of misconduct in the workplace is performed by an employee in a managerial position. Though reports of ethical misconduct in the workplace have declined from 55% in 2011 to 41% in 2013, unethical behaviors in the workplace remain an area of ongoing concern for organizations.

Ethical misconduct in the work place is detrimental to the ethical culture of an organization and may include counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs). CWBs are behaviors in the workplace contrary to the benefit, interest, and values of the organization. CWBs are performed intentionally to harm the organization or others in the organization (Fox and Spector, 2009; Martinko, Gundlach, & Douglas, 2002; Bennett & Robinson, 2003). As such, CWBs can either be directed at the organization (CWB-O) or at an individual (CWB-I) within the organization, both of which can affect the ethical environment of the organization (Fida, Paciello, Tramontano, Barbaranelli, & Farnese, 2015). CWBs vary in severity, ranging from small theft, to assault or abuse of others (Fox & Spector, 2001; Markinto et. al., 2002).

In order to further understand CWBs, several influencing factors must be considered. Research on the topic has consistently shown that situational variables and individual differences influence CWBs (Martinko et. al., 2002; Fida et. al., 2015). For example, researchers found that the presence of a code of ethics positively influenced employee perceptions of and participation in ethical conduct in the workplace (Adams, Tashchian, and Shore, 2001). Thus, the present research sought to examine the individual differences and attributions that influence whether

employees engage in CWBs. Specifically, we examined the impact of self-efficacy, perceptions of ethical misconduct, and guilt-proneness as they relate to CWBs. We hypothesize that self-efficacy will be negatively related to CWBs. Secondly, we hypothesize that perceptions of ethical misconduct and guilt-proneness will mediate the relationship between self-efficacy and CWBs. There is limited or absent literature that examines the specific mediated relationship proposed in this current research. Thus, we will first discuss the previous research on self-efficacy as it independently relates to CWBs, perceptions of ethical misconduct, and guilt-proneness. Secondly, we will examine perceptions of ethical misconduct as it relates to both CWBs and self-efficacy.

Generalized Self-Efficacy

Bandura defined self-efficacy as the belief in one's capability and mastery of an ability or task at hand. In his social learning theory, self-efficacy implies an aspect of perseverance beyond obstacle and misfortune (Bandura, 1977). Further, employees with high self-efficacy are more flexible and adaptable, more likely to persevere longer through difficulties at work or home, and more likely to be confident (Fida et. al, 2015). Self-efficacy is positively related to an internal locus of control (Phillips & Gully, 1997), self-impact (Wang, Gan, Wu, & Wang, 2015), self-regulation and self-control (Fida et. al, 2015).

Consequently, researchers found that employees with an internal locus of control are less likely to participate in CWBs (Shoss, Jundt, & Kobler, 2016; Martinko et. al., 2002). For instance, Fida et. al. (2015) found that self-efficacy acted as a protective factor that reduced CWBs due to stress in the workplace. Employees who feel more capable in their job and abilities respond better to stress in the workplace and are less likely to allow that stress to result in CWBs or other negative behaviors. An employee's perceptions of control and self-efficacy influence

their response to stressors. High levels of self-efficacy, including internal locus of control, result in positive stress management. As a result, employees are less likely to act impulsively or hostile in reaction to work related stressors. Alternatively, lower self-efficacy and external locus of control result in a higher likelihood for CWBs. (Fida et. al., 2015, Martink et. al., 2002). Additionally, low levels of self-efficacy increase the likelihood of both CWB-O and CWB-I (Fida et. al., 2015). Accordingly, we predict that those with higher levels of self-efficacy commit fewer CWBs.

Research consistently shows that an individual's level of self-efficacy seems to influence whether they engage in ethical misconduct (Wang et. al., 2015; Rafik, 2009; Fida et.al., 2015). For instance, self-efficacy is negatively related to perceptions of cheating (Lawson, 2004; Murdock & Anderman, 2006). Students with higher academic self-efficacy viewed cheating as unethical, while students with lower self-efficacy were less likely to view cheating as unethical. Unsurprisingly, cheating in school is a significant predictor of cheating in the workplace (Elias, 2009; Lawson, 2004). Unsurprisingly, the same students who view cheating as permissible while in school may also view cheating in the workplace as permissible.

Similarly, employees with higher self-efficacy claim more responsibility and have a higher locus of control (Wang et. al., 2015; Fida et. al., 2015). These self-efficacy-related beliefs effect the employee's perceptions. Employees with high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to react positively and speak up in ethical dilemmas, and are less likely to participate in CWBs (Wang et. al., 2015). This connection is crucial to understanding the antecedents of CWBs because self-efficacy is an individual difference variable that influences how a behavior is perceived, whether unethical or permissible. Accordingly, this study seeks to demonstrate that levels of self-efficacy influence perceptions of ethical misconduct.

Ethical Misconduct and CWBs in the Workplace

Ethical behaviors in the workplace are behaviors that adhere to social rules and codes (Trevino, Weaver, & Reynolds, 2006). Ethics require a normative judgment about right and wrong behavior, as well as adherence to societally accepted behaviors (Hailu, 2013). Thus, unethical behaviors are behaviors that violate those social rules and codes. For example, absenteeism, theft, aggression harassment, cheating, violence, and other like-natured behaviors are considered violations of workplace norms and standards and can be considered acts of ethical misconduct (Martinko et al., 2002).

Organizations have sought to develop methods to identify and avoid hiring individuals who might behave unethically in the workplace. Possible sources of CWBs have been extensively theorized and investigated. Some researchers claim that CWBs are due to work-related stressors, while others claim that perceptions of injustice in the workplace cause CWBs (Fox, Spector, & Miles, 2001; Martinko, Gundlach & Douglas, 2002). Regardless of cause, the intentions behind CWBs are always the same, harming either the organization or an individual in the organization. CWBs are often not reported or even witnessed within organizations. Researchers found that employees anonymously reported committing more CWBs than ever witnessed and reported by coworkers, suggesting that a significant amount of CWBs may go unnoticed and unreported by organizations (Cohen, Panter, Turan, Morse, & Kim, 2014).

Perceptions of Ethical Misconduct

When addressing CWBs in an organization, how employees perceive ethical misconduct is of importance. Moral awareness occurs when an ethical dilemma is identifiable to an individual. This identification process is crucial for an ethical decision to occur. Moral awareness not only makes ethical behavior possible, but more likely (Trevino et. al., 2006). An employee

may view certain behaviors in the workplace as permissible, while others may view that same behavior as unethical. Suggesting that perceptions of ethics differ among individuals. In such cases, moral awareness and reasoning are important factors to understand perceptions.

Cohen, Panter, Turan, Morse, and Kim (2014) found that participants with high self-regulation and higher levels of moral character were less likely to commit CWBs. Further, the factors that differentiated highly moral individuals from less moral individuals were examined. Results demonstrated that those in the low moral character class committed significantly more CWBs and fewer organizational citizenship behaviors than those in the high moral character class. To summarize, the level of moral character and self-regulation of each individual was a related to the amount of CWBs committed (Cohen, et. al., 2014).

Research conducted by Martinko et al. (2002) integrated previous theories on CWBs to create a behavior paradigm. This research found that most studies emphasized casual reasoning and attribution as key factors leading to CWBs. Casual reasoning includes employee's perceptions of fairness and justice. This study emphasized that employee attributions are made once an injustice is perceived and an employee decides to associate the blame with internal factors (failure) or external factors (others or organization). The attribution the employee makes about the incident, predicts the work-related outcome. Researchers suggested that *where* the employee places the blame, whether externally or internally influences whether or not they will participate in CWBs as well as the type of CWBs committed. Martinko et. al (2002) makes the case that attribution style is a promising individual variable that contributes to CWBs. Further, an employee will likely behave unethically if they attribute the negative work-related outcome due to a stable and internal cause, such as their own inability. Attributing a stable and internal cause motivated the employee to behavior self-destructively within the organization, suggesting that a

lack of belief in one's ability will result in unethical behavior. Similarly, if an employee

attributes the cause as external and stable, they will be more likely to commit a specific set of

CWBs such as revenge or violence. More specifically, the perceived cause of the disequilibria or

negative outcome becomes a source of motivation for an individual. How an employee

perceptually defines the disequilibria's cause will affect their behavioral response (Martinko et

al., 2002). Accordingly, we sought to examine perceptions of ethical misconduct and CWBs as

theoretically related variables.

Guilt-Proneness and CWBs

Previous research shows that the degree to which an employee feels guilt for CWBs

influences their participation in CWBs (Cohen, Panter, and Turan, 2013; Fox and Spector, 2009).

Guilt proneness is the sensitivity to wrongdoing that causes discomfort and remorse of personal

actions or behaviors (Cohen, Panter, Turan, 2013; Fox and Spector, 2009) Further, guilt

proneness is an individual difference that influences CWBs (Cohen, Panter, Turan, 2013; Spector

& Fox, 2009). For example, higher levels of guilt may cause someone to desire to repair the

damage caused by the CWBs, even cause them to avoid those same behaviors in the future

(Spector & Fox, 2009). Study by Cohen, Panter, and Turan (2013) showed that participants who

scored higher on the GASP, those who were more guilt-prone, committed significantly fewer

CWBs than those who scored lower on the GASP, those were less guilt-prone. Another study by

Cohen, Panter, and Turan (2012) showed significantly more participants who scored low on

guilt-proneness committed unethical negotiation behaviors than those who scored high on guilt-

proneness. Further, participants who scored higher on the GASP reported significantly more

delinquent behaviors than those who scored lower on the GASP, both at work and in general. We

argue that an individual's proneness to feel guilt will be influenced by their initial perception of

the misconduct, which as previously discussed, is influenced by their self-efficacy. Further, we propose a serial mediation with three key influential factors of CWBs; self-efficacy, perceptions of ethical misconduct, and guilt proneness.

Hypotheses

Based on the literature discussed above, we hypothesize that generalized self-efficacy is negatively related to counterproductive work behaviors and that this relationship is mediated by perceptions of ethical misconduct and guilt proneness.

Self-efficacy → Perceptions of ethical misconduct → Guilt →CWBs

Hypothesis 1a: General self-efficacy will be negatively related to counterproductive work behavior.

Hypothesis 1b: We hypothesized that CWBs (outcomes) are influenced by a serial mediation in which self-efficacy influences perceptions of ethical misconduct, which in turn influences guilt proneness, which then influences CWBs.

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Method

Participants

Participants were undergraduate psychology students recruited from a large South-Eastern university. Usable data was obtained from 190 participants. All participants were above 18 years of age, native English speakers, currently employed, and citizens of the United States. The average age of participants was 20 years ($SD = 3.9$). Participants worked an average of 22.9 hours per week ($SD = 11.0$). About 66% of participants were female, and 56.3% of participants were Caucasian.

Procedures

Participants were asked to complete a 30-minute online questionnaire using Qualtrics. The survey included all the scales used to assess GSE, Perceptions of Ethical Misconduct, and CWBs. The participants also completed demographic information, such as their gender, ethnicity, their schooling, and work experience. Participants were asked to share their GPA, year of study at university, job title, length at current job and the average hours they worked.

Materials

General Self-Efficacy. Chen, Gully, and Eden's (2001) 8-item General Self-Efficacy Scale was used to measure self-efficacy. Participants responded using a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). Higher scores indicate higher levels of self-efficacy (α=.94).

Perceptions of Ethical Misconduct. The Participant's ethical misconduct was measured using the Perceptions of Ethical Misconduct scale (Jackson & Knight, 2015). This scale contains 60 ethical transgressions based on observed unethical acts published by the Ethics Resource Center (Ethics Resource Center, 2013). Participants responded using a seven-point Likert scale that ranged 1 (*Very unethical)* to 7 (*Very ethical).* As such, high scores indicated that participants viewed the transgressions as more ethical (α=.96).

Guilt and Shame Proneness (GASP). Panter and Insko's (2011) 16-item scale was used to measure guilt proneness. Participants responded using a 7-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (*Very Unlikely*) to 7 (*Very Likely*). The scale consisted of four subscales, Guilt—Negative-Behavior-Evaluation (i.e. feeling remorse) Guilt – Repair (i.e. changing behavior in the future), Shame –Negative-Behavior-Evaluation and Shame – Repair. However, a general guilt-proneness score was calculated by averaging all of the items in the scale. Higher scores indicated that participants would be more prone to experience guilt (a=.86).

CWBs. Bennett and Robinson's (2000) 19-item interpersonal and organizational deviance scale (IODS) was used to measure CWBs. Participants responded using a five-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Daily*). The IODS contained two subscales measuring interpersonally focused behaviors and organizationally focused behaviors (α=.90 and α=.93, respectively).

Results

Our hypotheses were tested using Hayes' (2012) procedure to analyze mediation using Model 6. Because counterproductive work behavior was measured with two subscales (organizational deviance, and interpersonal deviance), a separate mediation analysis was conducted for each subscale. For interpersonal deviance, generalized self-efficacy significantly predicted perceptions of ethical misconduct ($b = -.317$, $p < .01$). Perceptions of ethical misconduct did not predict guilt proneness. Guilt proneness significantly predicted interpersonal deviance ($b = -.143$, $p = .04$). However, the mediated model as a whole was not significant. Similarly, for organizational deviance, generalized self-efficacy significantly predicted perceptions of ethical misconduct ($b = -.317$, $p < .01$). Perceptions of ethical misconduct did not predict guilt proneness and guilt proneness did not predict organizational deviance. Finally, there was not a significant indirect effect of self-efficacy on CWBs through perceptions of ethical misconduct and guilt-proneness. Thus, our hypothesized model was not supported.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between self-efficacy and CWBs through perceptions of ethical misconduct and guilt-proneness. The results supported that generalized self-efficacy is negatively related to CWBs. Specifically, those who have high levels

of self-efficacy tend to commit fewer CWBs. However, the results did not support our hypothesized mediated model. Generalized self-efficacy did not have a significant indirect effect on counterproductive work behavior, through perceptions of ethical misconduct and guilt-proneness. Though previous literature appeared supportive of the connections between these constructs, the mediation was not significant. Guilt-proneness was not predicted by perceptions of ethical misconduct and did not significantly predict counterproductive work behaviors toward the organization as proposed in the mediated model. Guilt proneness was significantly related to CWB-I, suggesting people may feel guilty after individual-targeted deviance compared to deviance towards the organization. These findings were somewhat consistent with the previous literature, where CWBs are influenced by both self-efficacy and perceptions of ethical misconduct. However, guilt-proneness did not hold up in the mediation.

In conclusion, the relationship of self-efficacy and CWBs is significant for organizations. Organizations can use this research to support self-efficacy boosting tactics within their training, recognizing its effect on negative work behaviors, such as, CWBs. Organizations may benefit in hiring employees with higher levels of self-efficacy to reduce employees' tendencies towards CWBs. Secondly, studies should be conducted to investigate the relationship of self-efficacy, perceptions of ethical misconduct, and CWBs apart from guilt-proneness. Our results suggested that a relationship exists between these constructs apart from guilt-proneness.

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