



Antecedents of Workplace Deviance in the South African Farming Sector

Harriet Rivalani Maluka; Tlou Samuel Setati; Fumani Donald Mabasa

Department of Business Management, University of Limpopo, South Africa

E-mail: harriet.maluka@ul.ac.za; tlou.setati@ul.ac.za; fumani.mabasa@ul.ac.za

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Abstract

Employees are regarded as essential resources in organisations and are capable of building up or destroying the organisations through their behaviour. This paper explores the antecedents of various forms of workplace deviant behaviours that can influence the functioning of an organisation in both constructive and destructive ways. A qualitative research design in the form of a narrative approach to inquiry was adopted in order to understand the participants' views and experiences in relation to farmworkers' engagement in various forms of constructive and destructive deviant behaviours at their workplace. Semi-structured interviews, using a critical incident technique were employed in order to collect data from 39 participants. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the collected narrative data. The antecedents of workplace deviance were grouped into two broader themes, individual and organisational antecedents. The constructive individual antecedents reported are self-determination and self-protection while constructive organisational antecedents include organisational commitment, job or work commitment, job knowledge, skills and experience, collegial support and expectation of rewards. The destructive individual antecedents are personal circumstances, cravings and drinking over the weekend while the destructive organisational antecedents include exhaustion, turnover intentions, work-related clashes, ignorance of procedures, lack of commitment, lack of job knowledge and retaliation. An insight in relation to the antecedents of both constructive and destructive workplace deviance can enable management to devise strategies that would encourage workers' engagement in constructive deviant behaviours and enhance organisation's competitiveness, while discouraging workers' engagement in destructive deviant behaviours that could result in organisational inefficiency.

Keywords: *Workplace Deviance; Destructive Deviance; Constructive Deviance; Deviant Behaviour; Deviant Acts; Farmworkers*

Introduction

Employees are regarded as one of the most crucial resources that can assist organisations to be effective and efficient (Xu, Zhang, Bu & He, 2022). This implies that the behaviour of employees in the workplace can influence the functioning of the organisation directly or indirectly, as well as negatively or positively, irrespective of the type of the industry. It can therefore be concluded that employees in any

organisation are capable of either destroying or building up the organisation. Research identified workplace deviance as a behaviour that can influence the effective and efficient functioning of the organisation in a negative or positive way either directly or indirectly (Yıldız & Alpan, 2015; Agrawal & Pandey, 2021; Sharma, 2021). Workplace deviance, also known as deviant workplace behaviour or workplace deviant behaviour, is regarded as a voluntary behaviour that violates organisational norms either in a negative (destructive) or positive (constructive) way (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Harvey, Harris, Gillis, & Martinko, 2014; Galperin, 2012; Mertens, Recker, Kummer, Kohlborn & Viaene, 2016). However, of the numerous studies that have been conducted globally on workplace deviance, the focus has been on the negative side of workplace deviance, while the positive side of it has been unimaginably neglected (Sharma, 2021; Sharma & Chillakuri, 2023). Therefore, this paper sought to fill the gap by focussing on both the negative and positive sides of workplace deviant behaviour.

Evidence from previous research has demonstrated that destructive workplace behaviours has been and still happening at alarming rates, with its negative consequences endangering the economic standing of organisations and the well-being of employees (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Jain, 2021). It is therefore not surprising that the concept of destructive deviance has earned popularity in the modern organisational behaviour literature and that it has suddenly become the most important research area (Braje, Aleksić & Jelavić, 2020; Agrawal & Pandey, 2021). Most studies seemed to have been conducted in the Western context as there seems to be very little studies conducted in the African context (Fagbohunge, Akinbode, & Ayodeji, 2012; Sunday, 2013). This results in limited understanding of the phenomenon, “workplace deviance” (Jain, 2021). Moreover, it seems very little has been done in attempting to understand the farm workers’ behaviour in their farming workplace (Erwee, 2016). As destructive workplace deviance has devastating consequences for organisations, such an oversight is shocking, because previous research revealed that the agriculture sector, specifically farming sector, is leading in terms of reported and unreported injury-on-duty incidents (Schierhout, Midgley & Myers., 1997; Hagel, King, Dosman, Lawson, Trask & Pickett 2016; Sharma, Prusty, Rathod, Arthi, Watterson & Cavalli, 2023).

On the other hand, empirical studies that paid attention to the positive side of workplace deviance appear to be very limited (Galperin, 2012; Sharma, 2021; Sharma & Chillakuri, 2023). There seems to be a movement towards paying attention to the positive side of workplace deviance, hence, Sharma (2021) as well as Sharma and Chillakuri (2023) regard research on the positive side of workplace deviance to be at its nascent stage. Even though research focussing on constructive deviance is still at its infancy, most desirable positive outcomes of constructive workplace deviance have been identified, which include amongst others, subjective well-being, long-term effectiveness, innovativeness, improved productivity, advancement of organisational norms and improved organisational performance (Mertens et al., 2016; Tongchaiprasit & Ariyabuddhipongs, 2016; Nafei, 2018; Sharma, 2022; Sharma & Chillakuri, 2023).

The agriculture sector, especially the farming sector, is regarded as an important sector to provide solutions to the problem of reduction in food supply as a result of growing population which could be doubled by 2050 in developing countries (Visser & Ferrer, 2015). It is therefore important for farm management to understand the antecedents of both constructive and destructive deviant behaviours in order to design managerial strategies that would encourage farmworkers to engage in constructive deviant behaviour and discourage them from engaging in destructive deviant behaviours. The main focus of this paper is to identify the antecedents of workplace deviant behaviours as a double-edged phenomenon, because destructive deviant behaviours may destroy the organisation while constructive deviant behaviours assist to build up the organisation (Farooq, Bhatti, Ishaq & Kashif, 2023). The paper is organised to include the literature review, methodology, results and discussion as well as conclusion and recommendations.

Literature Review

This section presents the existing literature on workplace deviance, with specific focus on the theoretical and empirical literature.

Theoretical Literature

There seems to be no specific theories that specifically and holistically explain workplace deviance as a double-edged phenomenon but the fundamental theory considered relevant for this paper is the Social Exchange Theory (SET). The theory is considered most useful in understanding behaviour of employees at the workplace (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), which also include workplace deviant behaviours. The theory is based on four premises: 1) “Exchange interactions result in economic and/or social outcomes;” 2) These outcomes are compared over time to other exchange alternatives to determine dependence on the exchange relationship;” 3) “Positive outcomes over times increase organisations’ trust of their trading partner(s) and their commitment to the exchange relationship;” and 4) “Positive exchange interactions over time produce relational exchange norms that govern the exchange relationship” (Lambe, Wittmann & Spekman, 2001, p. 6). The work of Blau (1964) on social exchange theory is mostly used in explaining the social exchange relationships.

According to Blau (1964), the SET is based on the notion that the exchange of social and material resources is crucial in human interaction because people’s voluntary actions are influenced by the returns they expect from their interaction. This implies that at the workplace, employer-employee interaction involves employees applying the norms of reciprocity to evaluate the costs and benefits they receive from their employer for their hard labour, and then decide whether to engage in destructive or constructive behaviours (Palmer, Komaraju, Carter & Karau, 2017). In line with the SET, it can be concluded that if employees perceive that they are treated better than the norm, they may feel obligated to work harder and go extra miles to produce desirable organisational outcomes, thus, by engaging in constructive deviant behaviours (Yildiz, et al. 2015). On the other hand, if employees perceive negative discrepancy between their actions and the expected returns, they may develop some negative attitudes towards their work and the organisation, which may manifest in destructive deviant behaviours (Yildiz & Alpkan, 2015).

Empirical Literature

The attempt to understand various reasons for employees to engage in deviant behaviour appeared to focus more attention on the dark side of workplace deviance, and ignored its bright side, with most studies focussing on identifying the negative causes of workplace deviance without paying attention to the positive causes of workplace deviance (Mertens et al., 2016; Yildiz, et al., 2015). Galperin (2012) and Yildiz, et al. (2015) emphasised that comprehensive understanding of workplace deviance requires an insight in relation to both negative and positive sides of workplace deviance within a particular context. In discussing possible factors that can serve as reasons for employees’ engagement in workplace deviant behaviours, they are grouped into two broad categories, namely; individual factors and organisational factors.

Individual Factors

Demographics factors, personality traits and personal experiences or problems as some of the individual factors identified in previous studies as individual factors contributing to employees’ engagement in different types of workplace deviant behaviours (Bolton, Becker & Barber, 2010; Galperin, 2012; DeShong, DeMond & Mullins-Sweatt., 2015; Palmer et al., 2017; Chen, Hu, & King, 2018). Research found gender (Ferguson, Carlson, Hunter & Whitten, 2012; Farhadi, Omar, Nasir,

Zarnaghash & Salehi, 2015) and age (Restubog, Garcia, Toledano, Amarnani, Tolentino & Tang, 2011; Farhadi et al., 2015) of employees assists to explain employees' tendencies to engage in deviant behaviours, whereby male and female as well as old and young employees engage in different types of deviant behaviours. Thus, employees' gender and age may influence their perceptions of fairness or unfairness in the application of the norms of reciprocity.

Personality characteristics such as Machiavellianism, psychopathy and narcissism (DeShong, Helle, Lengel, Meyer & Mullins-Sweatt, 2017; Palmer et al., 2017) were found to predict destructive workplace deviance while risk propensity linked to self-esteem and self-efficacy (Yildiz et al., 2015) and perfectionism (Chang, Chou, Liou & Tu, 2016) were found to predict constructive workplace deviance. Employees' personal experiences, circumstances, problems or stress could predict employees' likelihood to engage in deviant behaviour. Work-family conflict (Swimberghe, Jones, & Darrat, 2014; Spanuth & Wald, 2017), emotional exhaustion (Neves & Champion, 2015) and financial challenges (Greenberg, 1993) were found to be precursors of destructive deviant behaviours while employees' physical and psychological well-being was found to positively correlate with positive behavioural outcomes (Zakaria, Abdulatiff & Ali, 2014), which means that employees who are both physical and psychological well tend to engage in constructive deviant behaviours.

Organisational Factors

The organisational factors identified as precursors to employees' engagement in deviant behaviour include: leadership, organisational justice, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, perceived organisational politics (POP), perceived organisational support (POS), organisational culture, turnover intentions and organisational stress (Restubog et. al., 2011; Harvey et al., 2014; Neves & Champion, 2015; Yildiz et al., 2015). Abusive leadership involves public yelling, mockery, blaming and mistreatment, which forces employees to respond by engaging in destructive deviant behaviour (Liang, Brown, Lian, Hanig, Ferris & Keeping, 2018; Sungu, Hu & Weng, 2020) while transformational leadership instils employees' innovation, creativity and critical thinking, which result in constructive deviant behaviour (Fan, Uddin & Das, 2017).

Employees' perceptions of organisational injustice result in negative emotions linked to destructive deviant behaviours (Jaakson, Vadia, Baumane-Vitolina & Sumilo, 2017; Aslam, Shakir & Bugti, 2020) while perceptions of organisational justice encourage employees to engage in positive (constructive) behaviours (Yen & Teng, 2013). In their study, Plickert, Kay and Hagan (2017) sound that employees with higher levels of job satisfaction tend to engage in positive behaviours while those with lower levels of job satisfaction tend to engage in negative behaviour. Sunday (2013) reported that employees' reduced commitment to their organisation manifested in a form of destructive deviance while their commitment manifest in positive behaviours. However, Genevičiūtė-Janonienė and Endriulaitienė (2014) warned that higher levels of commitment may result in emotional exhaustion, forcing employees to react to their frustration by engaging in negative behaviour.

Employees with high levels POP tend to feel less dedicated to their jobs, opening a room for destructive deviance (Ambrose, Rajab, Syed, Donia & Darr, 2016; Amponsah-Tawiah & Annor, 2017). found that which ultimately tend to reduce their performance and creativity. Landells and Albrecht (2013) on the other hand, argued that POP can also produce positive outcomes by restoring justice or challenging the organisation's status quo, which may ultimately result in positive outcomes such as innovation, better organisational decision-making and problem solving as well as "long overdue" needed organisational change. POS is considered to be an antecedent of constructive deviance such as innovative or creative conduct (Altunoğlu & Gürel, 2015) while unsatisfactory POS tends to result in employees' engagement in various forms of destructive deviant behaviours (Aliasa & Rasdi, 2015).

Appelbaum, Laconi and Matousek (2007) found that observations of deviant role models in the organisation can build a culture of deviance while instilling a positive organisational culture to gain and sustain competitive advantage may influence employees' engagement in constructive deviant behaviour (Ogbonna & Harris, 2000). Tepper, Henle, Lambert, Giacalone & Duffy, (2009) discovered that employees with higher intentions to leave their organisation tend to focus more on satisfying their personal interests and cease to care about the organisation's concerns, resulting in destructive deviant behaviours while employees with lower intentions to leave showed concern for the well-being of their organisation.

Chronic organisational stress was reported to be a precursor to employees' engagement in negative deviant behaviours (Tian, Zhang & Zou, 2014; Smith, Hughes, DeJoy & Dyal, 2018). However, equipping employees with high levels of psychological capital such as hope, optimism, resilience, and efficacy may assist them to exhibit positive and desirable behaviour in stressful situations (Yim, Seo, Cho & Kim, 2017). The previous research findings presented above show that there are numerous factors that can influence workplace deviance in different contexts, making it crucial to understand the antecedents of workplace deviant behaviours in the farming sector.

Methodology

A qualitative research design was considered the most appropriate method to explore possible reasons for farmworkers' engagement in various forms of constructive and destructive deviant behaviours. Creswell (2007, p. 18) mentioned that qualitative research enables researchers to understand phenomena within particular contexts as they "conduct their studies in the 'field', where the participants live or work", a term called "naturalist methodology" by Kivunja and Kuyini (2017). A narrative research method was adopted to explore experiences of workplace deviance as expressed in lived and told stories of people. This is closely related to tapping into indigenous knowledge, which is stored in people's memories and expressed orally in the form of stories as suggested by Chilisa (2012). The research site was three commercial citrus fruit farms from a conglomerate commercial farm in Hoedspruit, the South Eastern part of the Limpopo Province in South Africa. Hoedspruit area is one of the primary agricultural producers for both the local and the export markets in South Africa, with many citrus fruit farms such as lemons, grapefruit, oranges and naartjies as the main produces (Evian, 2009).

Data was collected from a convenient sample of 39 permanently employed farmworkers based on the research participants' willingness and availability to participate as well as their accessibility (Bryman, 2012). Semi-structured interviews, requiring farmworkers to share their lived experience with regards to workplace deviance without deviating from the research objectives (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). An interview guide was used to request farmworkers to recall and reflect on the causes of workplace deviance. In order to uncover the two-edges of workplace deviance, the critical incident technique was employed. Grove and Fisk (1997, p. 67) considered a critical incident method as being an important contributor, "either positively or negatively, to an activity or phenomenon" while Thomas (2010) asserted that critical incident technique is useful in exploring extremely effective and extremely ineffective behaviours.

In order to gather data relating to constructive deviance, the researcher asked the following questions: "Think of a time when you or someone did something unusual in order to safeguard the well-being of your farm, tell me what you or the person did, what was the main reason for your or the person's actions?" Probing questions were also used in order to fill in the missing information during the data collection process. In order to gather data relating to destructive deviance, the researcher considered making use of a second person as it is sometimes difficult for people to report on their own wrongdoings (Stewart, Bing, Davison, Woehr & McIntyre, 2009; Galperin, 2012).

The farmworkers were asked the following questions relating to destructive deviant behaviour: “Think of a time when someone did something that threatened the well-being of your farm, tell me what the person did, what was the main reason for the person’s actions?” Probing questions were also used to fill in missing information during narration. A notebook was used to take field notes, and included recordings such as the work atmosphere, participants’ observable behaviour, and non-verbal communication as well as significant others’ behaviours as suggested by McMillan and Schumacher (2014). Permission was obtained from both the farms and farmworkers to conduct interviews and prior to the interviews, the participants’ consent to use recording devices was obtained. Thematic analysis was used to “identify, analyse and describe patterns or themes across the data set” (Bryman et al., 2014, p. 350).

Results and Discussion

The antecedents of constructive and destructive workplace behaviour are independently presented and pseudonyms are used in narrating the participants’ responses.

Antecedents of Constructive Deviant Behaviour

The results confirm previous findings in relation to the two categories of the antecedents of constructive deviant actions, namely; individual factors (Bodankin & Tziner, 2009; Chang et al., 2016) and organisational factors (Appelbaum et al., 2007; Fan et al., 2017).

Individual Factors

There are two themes created in relation to individual factors, namely; self-determination and self-protection. Ntsako (pseudonym), who was employed as a picker reported self-determination as a cause of constructive deviant behaviour by stating: *“When we are picking produces, they give us targets of 60 bins as a group. There was time when we worked so hard and exceeded the targets by filling 100 bins.”* In support of self-determination, Deci, Connell and Ryan (1989) as well as Geldenhuys, Laba and Venter (2014) asserted that a self-determined person has a sense of choice to initiate and regulate his or her own actions in a manner that will safeguard the well-being of the organisation through creativity.

Themba reported self-protection behaviour by stating; *“As the health and safety representative, I go an extra miles to search for more information about different chemicals in order to be in a better position to handle the chemicals with care as well as to educate others about the chemicals”*. The importance of self-protection is emphasised by Jonathan and Mbogo (2016) who found that workers who chose to behave in a manner that protect their health and safety save their organisation from health or injury related expenses. Although there are very few studies that directly linked the two individual factors (self-determination and self-protection) to constructive deviant behaviour per se, the factors could be linked to individual’s personality (Chang et al., 2016) and personal experiences (Zakaria et al., 2014).

Organisational Factors

The organisational factors reported to be antecedents of constructive deviant behaviours are grouped into five themes, namely; organisational commitment, job or work commitment, job knowledge, skills and experience, collegial support and expectation of rewards. Ntsumi narrated about organisational commitment as antecedent of constructive deviance and said: *“When workers walk in the orchard and noticed that a pipe that was supposed to channel water to a fellow block man or woman’s hectares is leaking, they fix the pipe and only informs the block man or woman assigned to the hectares later. If it happens that the pipe problem needs serious attention, they bend the pipe to avoid leakage, and then informs the concerned block man or woman to report the case. As block men or women are responsible*

for very huge areas, in most cases, it is difficult for them to notice the leaking pipes as they may be more about six (6) hectares away from where the problem is. The farm can lose money from leaking pipes". Although Genevičiūtė-Janonienė and Endriulaitienė (2014) stated that high organisational commitment does not always relate to positive results, it was discovered to be the antecedent of constructive deviant behaviour in relation to farmworkers' constructive behaviour, which is congruent to Sunday's (2013) research findings.

Job or work commitment was also identified as the precursor to constructive deviant behaviour in this study, although there seems to be limited studies with similar findings. However, Hegazy and AqylAlmaizar (2017) asserted that employees who are committed to their job will do everything in their power to meet their job's demands. This is supported by the following narratives: "*Our crop scout, Pule, always goes extra miles in order to ensure that the quality of produces is not compromised. When detecting diseases in the orchard, a crop scout is expected to detect ten (10) trees in one block (hectare) but Pule is so dedicated to his job to such an extent that he always goes beyond the prescribed number of plants if he does not get anything from the normal ten (10) trees in a block. He continues until he is satisfied that there is no problem*".

Employees' job knowledge, skills and experience were also regarded as antecedents of constructive deviant behaviour regardless in this study. This reflected on Pule's story; Pule, who was employed as crop scout in one of the three farms narrated: "*When I just started to train as a crop scout and still busy attending training, I noticed a particular disease in the orchard, and told the operational manager that I suspect that there is a challenge of red mite. Red mite is very dangerous as it causes the fruit to rot from inside out. When we went to the orchard; it was discovered that I was right. The operational manager was so impressed and informed the facilitator of the training programme I was attending. The facilitator gave me a prize of R150 as a token of appreciation as promised during the training sessions. The urgent interventions were made right away*".

Another incident was reported by Mula and said: "*Kheto was busy walking in the orchard and realised that some of the plants were showing signs of being infected with a particular disease. He reported the matter to the supervisors and the operational manager and suggested possible ways that could be used to treat the disease. The supervisors and the operational manager did not believe him and treated Kheto's suggestions as some kind of a joke. They instead decide to work with the farm's crop scouts to treat the plants but the disease continued to spread until lots of plants got infected. The supervisors decided to call Kheto and asked for his assistance. He told them what needed to be done in order to treat and control the disease from spreading further and his suggestions managed to save the plants. His suggestions were based on his knowledge and experience acquired from his previous employer*". In support of this, Spanuth and Wald (2017) emphasised that an employees' job knowledge and skills can enhance the employees' problem-solving skills and open room for creativity. Mertens and Recker (2020) asserted that employees who are empowered with knowledge and skills are more likely to engage in constructive deviant behaviours.

Collegial support as an antecedent of constructive deviant behaviour is evident from the following narratives: "*A new plantation area was identified and had to be prepared in order to extend the orchard. There area had long grasses, weeds and trees, which made it very difficult to clean and prepare it. We tried to burn the grass in order to reduce the forest, but Nsovo stood up against the idea and indicated that if the whole area is burnt, it will be very difficult to control the fire. He suggested that the grass in the area surrounding be slashed before burning the area and we work on that together. In that way, we were able to huge fire was in the middle and not in the slashed area, which assisted in controlling the fire successfully.*" Kurtessis, Eisenberger, Ford, Buffardi, Stewart and Adis (2015) considered collegial support an important aspect of POS. Previous research findings identified POS as an antecedent of constructive behaviour (Vatankhah, Javid & Raoofi, 2017).

Lastly, expectation of rewards is another antecedent of constructive deviant behaviour, which corresponds with previous studies on the norms of reciprocity associated with the SET (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Palmer et al., 2017). Thus, the perceptions of some of form of fairness in the evaluation of the rewards received in comparison to the hard labour or efforts exerted would result in positive behaviour and attitudes.

Antecedents of Destructive Deviant Behaviour

The research findings confirm previous findings in relation to the two categories of the antecedents of destructive deviant actions, namely; individual factors (Feder & Yu, 2019) and organisational factors (Appelbaum et al., 2005; Smith et al., 2018).

Individual Factors

There are three themes were created in relation to individual antecedents of destructive deviant behaviour, namely; personal circumstances, cravings and drinking over the weekend. A person's personal circumstances such as poverty may contribute to a worker's tendency to engage in destructive deviant behaviour at the workplace, especially workers who are employed in low paid employment as they seem to fail to make a sustainable minimum standard of living (Feder & Yu, 2019). Thus, they will perceive their wages to be lower than their hard labour. Philani attested: *"People are caught stealing produces by security officers. Working with produces like fruit is very tempting. They take time to give us our share and therefore the cravings got out of hand, resulting in people stealing. Most of the people working here have children, they sometimes steal for them"*

Cravings were reported to be a possible antecedent to destructive deviant behaviour and Thato attested by saying: *"The workers seemed to give in to their cravings, it is hard to work with food and do not taste them. "Recently, a temporary worker stole oranges from the orchard and when she left the orchard, the security officer searched her bag and found the oranges. The behaviour seemed to continue even though they always tell us that theft is not tolerated in the farm and that it leads to dismissal"*. Nicholls and Hulbert-Williams (2013) defined cravings as strong desires for particular types of food to such an extent that a person finds it difficult to resist. This means that the workers craving for food that they work with may engage in destructive deviant act relating to theft if their personal circumstances do not allow them to satisfy their cravings.

The results confirm previous findings that the habit of drinking or abusing alcohol is one of the personal problems that negatively influence the behaviour of farmworkers (Evans, 2015; Gossage, Snell, Parry, Marais, Barnard, de Vries, Blankenship, Seedat, Hasken, & May, 2014; Herrick, 2012). To confirm this, Kheto said; *"There is one worker who always comes under influence on Mondays, especially after month end. The worker is one of the hardest working workers, but his main problem is alcohol"*. The habit of abusing alcohol is regarded as a societal problem in South Africa, but farmworkers seemed to be trapped in this kind of habit because of the "dop system" which was historically dominated in the farming sector (Evan; 2015; Gossage et al., 2014; Herrick 2012). A "dop system" is a system that provides farmworkers with alcohol as a partial payment (London, 2000). Nel and Werner (2014) reported that alcohol abuse among workers may have negative at the workplace such as decline in quality and quantity of work, increased accidents and poor interpersonal relationships with co-workers (p. 76).

Organisational Factors

There are seven themes created in relation to organisational antecedents of destructive deviant behaviours, namely: exhaustion, turnover intentions, work-related clashes, ignorance of procedures, lack of commitment, lack of job knowledge and retaliation. The narratives relating to exhaustion as an antecedent was based on the short lunch break given to the workers. This is captured from Thato's

remarks: *“During picking season, workers are expected to work as fast as they could, and by the time they go for their lunch break, they are extremely exhausted to such an extent that thirty (30) minutes becomes very short for them to eat their lunch and “recharge” at the same time. This implies that exhaustion may be linked to organisational stress, which was found to be a possible cause of employees’ destructive deviant actions (Appelbaum et al., 2005; Smith et al., 2018).*

Turnover intentions were found to be antecedents of destructive deviant behaviour, which is consistent with previous studies’ findings (Akgunduz & Eryilmaz, 2018; Christian & Ellis, 2014; De Simone et al., 2018; Luo et al. 2013; Qu, Jo & Choi, 2020). Thapelo said: *“There are those who want to resign from the farm but fear that if they do, they will not get their benefits from the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF). In such cases, workers would simply steal harvest so that they can be dismissed”.*

Work-related clashes could be related to poor working relationship at the workplace and Thabo narrated about deviant behaviour caused by poor working relationship: *“During picking season, a temporary female worker found it difficult to stand the “heat of working at a very fast pace” and physically fought with a temporary male worker over bins used to place in harvests. The female worker “attacked and bit the male worker but the male worker did not fight back. The incident forced other workers to desert their work and tried to stop the fight”.* Previous research found that employees with poor relationships, which is a feature of low job satisfaction, tend to engage in various destructive deviant actions (Mulki et al., 2006; Muafi, 2011; Plickert et al., 2017).

Workers’ ignorance of procedures was another precursor of destructive deviant behaviour identified. This is confirmed by the narratives below: *“Workers who pick the produces are given scissors specifically designed to pick the fruit but when they realise that the supervisor is not around, they use their hands to pick the produces because they perceive it as being easier and faster for them. What they do not realise is that they compromise the quality fruit, to be exported”.* Although there seems to be limited research that specifically identified ignorance of procedures as an antecedent of destructive deviant behaviour, it can be concluded that if workers observe that those who ignore procedures got away with it, such behaviour can become a norm in the organisation. In that case, organisational culture that tolerates destructive deviance may serve as an antecedent. Appelbaum et al. (2007) confirmed that observations of deviant role models in the organisation explained some of the reasons for employees’ engagement in deviant actions.

The results revealed that workers’ lack of commitment was an antecedent of the destructive deviant actions. This is consistent with previous studies (Chang et al., 2011; Hegazy & AqylAlmaizar, 2017; Liao et al., 2004; Sunday, 2013). Kurhula narrated the behaviour and said: *“There were three workers who did not want to work and keep on “chatting” and “texting” on their phone. When the supervisor told them to focus on their duties, they just laughed and continued with their deviant acts. The matter was reported the senior supervisor but in an informal manner. One day, as the operational manager drove around, he found them busy “chatting” on their phones during working hours”.*

Although limited studies linked lack of job knowledge to destructive deviant behaviour, it was reported to be a possible antecedent of destructive deviant behaviour among farmworkers. Jabu confirmed this in his narratives: *“There was a worker who failed to perform his duties as it was expected of him. The supervisor tried to set daily targets for the worker in an attempt to force the worker to complete the assigned duties, but the intended results were not achieved. The worker failed to reach the daily targets assigned to him. The worker’s poor performance forced the supervisor to resort to taking disciplinary actions against the worker. It was then discovered that the worker did not understand how he should perform his duties but he failed to tell anyone or to seek for assistance from the supervisor or other workers”.*

Retaliation and disrespect of supervisors were reported to be the antecedents of destructive deviant behaviour among the farmworkers. Andzani confirmed this when he reported; “*Hlulani was responsible of fifteen (15) blocks. He decided to work slowly in order to make sure that he covered work for few blocks. This was one of his ways to show unhappiness with his workload as he had many blocks to take care of as compared to others who had about ten (10) blocks. At the end, another person (a temporary worker) was assigned to work with him and share the responsibility of fifteen (15) blocks*”. Liang et al. (2018) found that employees tend to retaliate against abusive supervision and perceived unfairness at the workplace by engaging in destructive deviant behaviour. Agrawal and Pandey (2021) asserted that discontent employees demonstrate their discontentment by not following the prescribed norms of the organisation and by engaging in more serious destructive actions such as theft or sabotage. Thus, in line with SET, employees used the social exchange norms whereby the negative acts received from supervisors are returned through destructive deviant acts.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Management of employee behaviour is of utmost importance in any organisation as organisations rely on employees to effectively carry out their duties and responsibilities while on the other hand employees’ negative acts may significantly harm organisations. The shared themes assisted to identify the antecedents of workplace deviance as a doubled-edged behaviour, particularly in the farming sector. These include both individual and organisational factors. Understanding the antecedents of both destructive deviant behaviours and constructive deviant behaviours may assist to decrease the opportunity for employees to engage in destructive deviant behaviour while putting in place mechanisms that would encourage them to engage in constructive behaviours.

This study recommends that for management to holistically manage workplace deviance, they should devise mechanisms to address abusive leadership while promoting transformational leadership; identify possible causes of low job satisfaction in an attempt to improve employees’ satisfaction; address employee attrition and invest on employee retention; promote ethical organisational culture and put in place strategies to uproot unethical culture; identify sources of low commitment in order to improve employees’ commitment; create supportive working environment to ensure positive stress (eustress) and minimal room for destructive conflict; and equipping workers with skills that will enable them to be creative, make informed decisions and successfully solve work-related problems.

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