Constructive workplace deviance for rising Africa: A case of selected South African farmworkers

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Abstract

The rapid population growth in Africa is estimated to double by 2050, which could create food security challenges. The agriculture industry, especially farming sector, is considered one of the industries that can proactively rise and provide the needed African solutions to solve not only food security and economic stability but also unemployment and poverty. Proactive positive thinking and mechanisms are needed. This paper explores the forms of constructive deviant behaviors and managerial strategies to promote constructive deviance amongst farmworkers at selected South African fruit farms. As employees are important resources to assist organizations in realizing their objectives, understanding the forms of constructive deviance amongst farmworkers and the managerial strategies, could assist the sector to continue rising. There seems to be limited research on the positive side of workplace deviance, especially in the African context. A qualitative research design within the paradigm of constructivism was employed to gather in-depth and invaluable data. Semi-structured interviews in the form of a narrative inquiry, were used to collect data. Thirty farmworkers and nine supervisors from three farms constituted the convenient sample for this research. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the collected narrative data. The findings revealed eight forms of constructive deviance, namely: extra-role job performance, high-in-role job performance, creative job performance, whistle-blowing, urgent decision-making, disobedience of unreasonable orders and utilization of knowledge and skills. Nine managerial strategies to promote constructive deviant behaviors include effective communication, performance management, rewarding good performance, provision of training, supervisors’ support, degree of autonomy, opportunity to utilize skills, proper placement, and promotion of teamwork. The findings and further research could contribute positively towards assisting the agriculture sector to continue flourishing.

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Introduction

The Sub-Saharan African countries have been experiencing food security challenges since 2015, and the challenges have been worsened by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ukraine-Russia conflict and the rapid population growth (Nchanji & Lutomia, 2021; Visser & Ferrer, 2015; Wudil, Usman, Rosak-Szyrocka, Pila’t & Boye, 2022). The emergence of COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on the growth and survival of many sectors (Crespi-Cladera et al., 2021; Nchanji & Lutomia, 2021), which also contributed to food insecurity in the Sub-Saharan Africa. The Ukraine and Russia war resulted in high food costs, making it more difficult for developing countries, including African countries, to secure food while the population continues to grow (Wudil et al., 2022). The rapid population growth in Africa could be doubled by 2050, which could exacerbate food security challenges (Guttal, 2021; Visser & Ferrer, 2015).

The agriculture industry, especially farming sector, is considered one of the industries that can proactively rise and provide the direly needed African solutions to solve not only food security and economic stability for Africa, but unemployment and poverty (Visser...
Constructive workplace deviance refers to a “voluntary behavior that deviates from the organizational norms, but that stems from positive intentions and/or has positive consequences” that contributes to the wellbeing of an organization, its members, or both (Galperin & Burke, 2006, p. 332). Employees are regarded as one of the most crucial resources that can assist to enhance the wellbeing of organizations (Yildiz et al., 2015). In the farming sector, farmworkers play an important role in assisting the sector to flourish (Devereux et al., 2017). Thus, instilling positive behaviors of creativeness amongst farmworkers is of utmost importance.

This paper explores the forms of constructive deviant behaviors and managerial strategies to promote constructive deviance amongst farmworkers at selected South African fruit farms. The main research questions addressed are: “What forms of constructive deviant behaviors are relevant to the farmworkers?” and “How should constructive workplace deviance be managed to benefit both farmworkers and the commercial farms?” As employees are the most important resources to assist organizations in realising their objectives, understanding the forms of constructive deviance amongst farmworkers and the managerial strategies thereof, could assist the farming sector to continue rising.

This paper is structured as follows: the first part is the introduction, followed by a literature review as a second part, focusing on theoretical and empirical studies that shed a light on linkage between theory and practice. The third part introduces the background information on research and methodology. Afterwards, the findings of the study and the implications of the study for the agriculture industry are discussed. Lastly, this paper concludes with main points, recommendations, future research directions and limitations.

Literature Review

This section presents the existing literature on constructive workplace deviance by exploring the theoretical background perceived useful in understanding constructive workplace deviance as well as previous empirical findings in relation to constructive workplace deviance.

Theoretical and Conceptual Background

There seems to be no comprehensive theory or specific theories regarding constructive workplace deviance because research on the positive side of workplace deviance is at its nascent stage (Sharma, 2021; Sharma & Chillakuri, 2023). The fundamental theories that could be useful in understanding the concept of “constructive workplace deviance” include Social Exchange Theory, Equity Theory, Organizational Justice Theory, and Typology of Constructive Workplace Deviance.

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory (SET) is regarded as one of the most significant conceptual models for understanding behavior in the workplace (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) and Blau’s (1964) work on social exchange theory is mostly used. Blau’s (1964) SET is based on the crucial idea that the exchange of social and material resources is an important form of human interaction, and that the voluntary actions of people are driven by the returns they expect from such an interaction. Thus, employees weigh the costs and benefits they are receiving for their hard labour, and choose to engage in a positive behavior when the norms of reciprocity are perceived (Palmer et al., 2017). The SET can assist organizations to devise effective managerial strategies to promote employees constructive deviance.

Equity Theory

Adams’ (1963) equity theory provides a useful understanding into the importance of perceptions of fairness in the workplace (Ryan, 2016). In the work settings, the equity theory focuses on the social comparisons employees tend to make between their inputs and the outputs they receive as well as the inputs and outputs of their comparison-others (Griffin et al., 2016). The comparison is used as the basis for forming an influence of whether there is equity or inequity. The inputs that employees could consider include amongst others their performance, loyalty, commitment, skills, seniority, personal sacrifice and the degree of responsibility; while outputs include financial rewards, benefits, praise, recognition, promotion opportunities, conducive work environment and a sense of achievement (Robbins et al., 2014). Thus, if employees perceive some forms of equity, they may feel that they owe the organization, resulting in putting more efforts to assist the organization to realise its objectives. This may include deviating from organizational norms with good intentions of achieving organizational objectives. The equity theory can assist organizations to develop managerial strategies to effectively promote constructive deviance.

Organizational Justice Theory

Organizational justice theory can also assist in understanding employees’ engagement on deviant behavior. Organizational justice refers to the “just and fair manner in which organizations treat their employees” – hence the terms “justice” and “fairness” tend to be...
used interchangeably (Greenberg, 1990 cited in Fernandes and Awamleh, 2006, p. 702). Organizational justice is based on three key components used to evaluate fairness, namely; procedural, distributive, and interactional justice (Greenberg, 1990; Restubog et al., 2011). Distributive justice involves an individual’s perceptions of fairness concerning the distribution of resources and outcomes in the organization, which is based on the reciprocity principles of SET and equity theory (Greenberg, 1990; Williamson & Williams, 2011). Procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness of the organizational procedures used to make decisions relating to the outcome decisions (Fernandes & Awamleh, 2006; Williamson & Williams, 2011). Interactional justice represents the extent to which managers and supervisors treat people with dignity and respect and clearly explain the reasons for their decisions (O’Neill & Hastings, 2011). Previous research suggests that when employees perceive that they are treated fairly in the organization, they tend to engage in constructive work-related behaviors while discarding any form of counterproductive behavior (Wolfe et al., 2018). The organizational justice theory can assist organizations to devise effective managerial strategies to promote constructive deviance.

**Typology of Constructive Workplace Deviance**

Spreitzer and Sonenshein (2004) challenged the notion of research on workplace deviance by focusing merely on the negative behaviors, and conducted a study aimed at understanding the positive side of workplace deviance. The study resulted in the development of a typology of constructive deviant behavior and possible items to measure constructive workplace deviance based on the three pro-social types of behaviors, namely; whistle-blowing, organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) and corporate social responsibility. Whistle-blowing refers to the disclosure of legally or ethically suspicious information or behavior, with a constructive intentions of preventing an ethical wrong-doing aimed at protecting the interest of the organization (Appelbaum et al., 2007; Dworkin & Baucus, 1998; Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2004).

OCBs involve behaviors that could not be enforced by the organization in terms of formal role expectations as they involve voluntary behaviors that depart from organizational norms with good intentions (Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2004). Corporate social responsibility activities refer to business practices that benefit the society and potentially the organization and according to Spreitzer and Sonenshein (2004), some corporate social responsibility behaviors may involve substantial departures from organizational norms with good intentions. This typology assists to identify the three pro-social types of behaviors, which can be regarded as forms of constructive workplace deviance. Although the typology focused on three pro-social behaviors, research views creativity or innovation as another aspect that can contribute to constructive deviance. Creative deviance involves employees deviating from organizational norms by generating new ideas in order to advance the objectives of the organization (Galperin, 2012; Lin et al, 2016).

**Empirical Review**

Galperin (2012) conducted research aimed at developing and validating a measure of constructive deviance and two categories of forms of constructive workplace deviance were identified, namely; organizational constructive deviance and interpersonal constructive deviance. Organizational deviant behavior refers to employees’ voluntary actions that deviates from organizational norms and directed towards the organization (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Galperin, 2012). The set of actions constituting to organizational constructive deviance include “reporting co-workers’ wrong-doing in order to bring about a positive organizational change, not following the supervisor’s orders in order to improve work procedures, an employee breaking the rules to perform her job better, violating organizational procedures in order to solve a problem, disobeying supervisor’s instructions in order to perform more efficiently as well as deviating from dysfunctional organizational policies or procedures in order to solve a problem” as identified by (Galperin, 2012, p. 2998).

Interpersonal deviant behavior refers to employees’ voluntary actions that deviates from organizational norms and directed towards other organizational members (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Galperin, 2012). The behaviors that constitute to interpersonal constructive deviant behavior include: “disagreeing with others in order to improve current work procedures, departing from organizational procedures in order to solve a customer’s problem, disagreeing with the supervisor’s orders in order to improve work procedures and bending organizational rule in order to satisfy a customer’s needs” (Galperin, 2012, p. 2998). Previous studies support that forms of constructive deviance can be directed towards the organization and/or organizational members (Lin et al., 2016; Mertens et al., 2016; Sharma, 2022; Sharma, & Chilakuri, 2023; Yildiz et al., 2015). Thus, employees’ tendencies to deviate from organizational norms or rules may not necessarily yield negative outcomes but organizations can benefit from constructive deviance. It is therefore essential for managers to understand the possible ways to promote constructive deviant behaviors at the workplace.

**Research and Methodology**

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 deviance and possible strategies to promote constructive deviant behaviors at their workplace. Narrative research in a form of oral history was useful in gaining insights into farmworkers’ subjective views in relation to forms and management of constructive workplace deviance based on their experiences from the past (Creswell, 2013). Kumar (2011) asserted that oral history as a form of narrative approach is a qualitative research approach appropriate to study people’s personal perceptions, experiences and accounts of an event in their own words. Narrative research assists in decolonising the manner in which research is conducted, especially in the African context (Chilisa, 2012). Africans are deep-rooted in oral cultures and traditions, making them to be vibrant in storytelling (Tuwe, 2016).
It is important in qualitative research to search for research site where the phenomenon to be studied is most likely to occur and to locate people from which the data can be collected (Marshalt & Rossman, 1995; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The research site chosen for this study was three commercial citrus fruit farms belonging to a conglomerate citrus producer in Hoedspruit, South Africa. Hoedspruit area is one of the primary agricultural producers for both the local and the export markets, with citrus such as lemons, grapefruit, oranges and naartjies as well as mangoes as the main produces. The area was chosen based on the fact that there are many citrus fruit farms within close proximity (Evian, 2009). The rationale for choosing workers from the three selected citrus farms was based on accessibility and the fact that the farms export fresh citrus, which required them to be competitive.

Although the chosen farms employed approximately 130 permanent workers and 160 casual (temporary) workers, the population of this study included permanent employees and their supervisors. The rationale for choosing only permanent farmworkers was based on the assumption that workers who were permanently employed were in a better position to narrate crucial stories relating to their work and the workplace as compared to those who were in employ for a short period of time.

As Creswell (2007) suggested that in a narrative research, one or two individuals, or a larger pool of 20 to 30 participants can be used to develop a collective story, data was collected from a convenient sample of 30 farmworkers and 9 supervisors. Malterud et al., (2016) asserted that the sample size in qualitative research is necessary for planning, while the adequacy of the final sample size must be continuously evaluated during the research process as sampling size is based on reaching data saturation. The data saturation was confirmed after the process of collecting data (during data analysis stage), to ascertain whether there was a need to conduct more interviews in the farms or not.

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather concrete descriptions of farmworkers’ lived experience by recalling and reflecting on constructive deviant incidents from their past (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015). The participants’ consent to conduct interviews and to use recording devices was obtained in order to capture everything without missing out on important information (Guest & Mitchell, 2007; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Thematic analysis was used to analyse the collected narrative data, whereby patterns or themes were created across the data set. The following steps were followed: “transcribing the data, generating initial codes, collating codes into potential themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming the themes, and lastly, selecting vivid and compelling extracts” (Bryman et al., 2014, p. 351).

Findings and Discussions

Forms of constructive behaviors

The analysis produced eight themes linked to the forms of constructive behaviors as identified by the participants, namely; extra-role job performance, high in-role job performance, creative job performance, whistle blowing, urgent decision making, disobedience of unreasonable orders, utilization of knowledge and skills as well as knowledge sharing. The descriptions of these themes are summarised in Table 1.

The constructive deviant actions which were reported to have occurred in the three farms include both forms of constructive deviance; interpersonal and organizational constructive deviant behaviors as identified by previous research (Galperin, 2012; Yildiz et al., 2015). Interpersonal constructive deviant behavior is aimed at safeguarding the well-being of the organizational members while organizational constructive deviant behavior is aimed at safeguarding the well-being of the organization (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Galperin, 2012). The results on the two forms of constructive deviant behaviors are presented separately.

Interpersonal constructive deviant behavior

The results show that the interpersonal constructive deviant actions existing in the farms can be grouped under the theme, knowledge sharing. Knowledge sharing is regarded as dissemination of task information as well as the “know-how” and “know-why” in order to assist and collaborate others with others in problem-solving and development of new ideas, which assist an organization to gain a competitive advantage (Huie et al., 2019; Wang & Noe, 2010). Although limited research identified knowledge sharing as one form of constructive workplace deviance, Huie et al. (2019) found that tacit knowledge sharing has positive influence on job performance. Razaka et al. (2016) supported this by stating that knowledge sharing in the organization assists in increasing the organization’s productivity and employees’ innovativeness and creativeness.
Table 1: List of Constructive Workplace Deviance Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extra-role job performance</td>
<td>Engaging in behavior that goes beyond the specified formal job requirements in order to ensure the smooth functioning of the organization and to promote organizational goals (Reychav &amp; Sharkie, 2010; Somech &amp; Drach-Zahavy, 2000).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High in-role job performance</td>
<td>Engaging in actions that are in line with the formal job requirements but performing in a manner that exceptionally assists the organization in accomplishing its objectives (Ghosh et al., 2017; Griffin et al., 2019; Sosik et al., 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative job performance</td>
<td>Innovative and potentially valuable products, ideas, procedures or solutions generated and applied by the employee and judged by others as contributing factor to effective organizational performance (Lin et al., 2016; Reaves, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whistle blowing</td>
<td>An act of disclosing any kind of information or activity that is considered to be illegal, immoral, illegitimate or unethical within the practices to relevant people in the organization (Kidwell &amp; Kochanowski, 2005; Spreitzer &amp; Sonenshein, 2004).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urgent decision making</td>
<td>An immediate action that an employee takes to attend to an important urgent situation based on previous experience in order to achieve organizational goals (Turpin &amp; Marais, 2004).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disobedience of unreasonable orders</td>
<td>Refusing to take orders that may put an organization or organizational member at risk (Galperin, 2012).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge sharing</td>
<td>Dissemination of task information as well as the “know-how” and “know-why” in order to assist and collaborate others with others in problem-solving and development of new ideas, which assist an organization to gain a competitive advantage (Huie et al., 2019; Wang &amp; Noe, 2010).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilization of knowledge and skills</td>
<td>Applying job knowledge, skills and experience to perform the job in an effective and productive manner (Cummings &amp; Worley, 2009; Nel &amp; Werner, 2017).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Organizational constructive deviant behavior

The results show that the organizational constructive deviant actions existing in the farms can be grouped under the following seven themes: extra-role job performance, high in-role job performance, creative job performance, whistle blowing, urgent decision making, disobedience of unreasonable orders as well as utilization of knowledge and skills.

Extra-role job performance

Extra-role performance is regarded as employees’ engagement in behaviors that go beyond the specified formal job requirements in order to ensure the smooth functioning of the organization and to promote organizational goals (Hui et al., 1999; Reychav & Sharkie, 2010; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2000). Thus, employees voluntarily perform extra tasks in order to assist the organization to realise its objectives. Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2000) suggested that in order to promote organizational efficiency, employees should be encouraged to consider extra-role behavior in three levels, namely, towards the customer, co-workers and the organization. Extra-role job performance is a dimension of OCB, which is linked to typology of CWD.

High in-role job performance

High in-role job performance refers to employees’ performance that is in line with the formal job requirements but such performance exceptionally assists the organization in accomplishing its objectives (Griffin et al., 2019; Sosik et al, 2011). Ghosh et al. (2017) discovered that perceptions of procedural justice tend to influence employees’ engagement in high in-role job performance and further emphasised that the proficiency with which employees perform their formal duties depend largely on the organizations’ ability to engage workers in the process of decision making related to their jobs. In-role job performance is another dimension of OCB, which is linked to typology of CWD.

Creative job performance

Creative job performance is defined as innovative and potentially valuable products, ideas, procedures or solutions generated and applied by the employee and judged by others as contributing factor to effective organizational performance (Lin, et al., 2016; Reaves, 2015). Spreitzer and Sonenshein (2004) regard creativity or innovation as one of the important aspects contributing to constructive workplace deviance. Reaves (2015) found that significant relationship exists between creative performance and effective task performance, which eventually result in organizational success.

Whistle blowing

Kidwell and Kochanowski (2005, p. 135) define whistle blowing as “an act of disclosing any kind of information or activity that is considered to be illegal, immoral, illegitimate or unethical within the practices to relevant people in the organization”. Henik (2015) emphasised that whistle blowing can assist in safeguarding the well-being of the organization only if the organization responds
positively to whistle blowing. Gao and Brink (2017) supported this by indicating that the sole reason for whistle-blowers to report wrongdoings is to assist in stopping the recurrence of wrongdoings in the near future.

**Urgent decision making**

Urgent decision making may be regarded as an immediate action that an employee takes in order to attend to an important urgent situation based on previous experience in order to achieve organizational goals (Turpin & Marais, 2004). The participants indicated that there are circumstances which forced workers to make urgent decisions in order to safeguard the well-being of the farms. Pradhan and Jena (2017) suggested that an employee’s positive reactivity in times of emergency or difficulties can be regarded as creative performance. Thus, urgent decision making can constitute to constructive workplace deviance when it is taken to safeguard the well-being of the organization or its members.

**Disobedience of unreasonable orders**

Galperin (2012) viewed disobedience of unreasonable orders as employees’ refusal to take orders perceived they may put an organization or organizational members at risk. The participants reported incidents relating to workers’ refusal to take unlawful orders from their supervisors. It can be concluded that employee’s disobedience of unlawful orders constitutes constructive deviant act at the workplace as it is a voluntary action aimed protecting either the well-being of the organizational member(s) or the organization itself.

**Utilization of knowledge and skills**

Nel and Werner (2017) considered utilization of knowledge and skills as employees’ application of knowledge and skills to perform the job in an effective and productive manner. The participants reported that there were incidents whereby workers utilize their knowledge and skills in order to perform their prescribed formal duties and other duties in the farms in an exceptional manner. These findings are similar to the warnings against underutilization of knowledge and skills by Wright and Sissons (2012), who found that low-wage sectors tend to be guilty of poor skills utilization, which in turn inhibit the low-wage sectors from growing and eventually becoming more competitive.

**Promotion of constructive behaviors**

The participants identified possible managerial strategies to promote constructive deviance and 17 themes were created, namely; communication, performance management, rewarding good performance, provision of training, supervisors’ support, degree of autonomy, opportunity to utilize skills, proper placement, promotion of teamwork, promoting good work relations, workers’ participation, providing promotion opportunities, rewards for long service, promoting whistle blowing, provision of work clothing, equipment and safety gears, consistency in the application of rules and procedures as well as equitable distribution of work.

**Communication**

The participants indicated that communication about the importance of in-role performance to make sure that all workers know about what is expected of them in terms of their prescribed formal duties and responsibilities can promote constructive behaviors. Ghosh et al. (2017, p. 30) asserted that job descriptions outline essential duties and responsibilities that are expected of the employee and the basic purpose of the work the employee is expected to perform”. Mangaleswaran and Kirushanthan (2015) indicated that job descriptions serve as bases for performance evaluation, which means that when employees know what is expected of them, they may engage in high in-role performance in order to get the rewards for their contributions. This is in line with the assumptions of the SET and equity theory.

**Performance management**

Performance management is defined as “an integrated process of defining, assessing, and reinforcing employee work behaviors and outcomes” (Cummings & Worley, 2009, p. 421). The participants emphasised the importance of conducting continuous performance evaluation in an attempt to establish the extent to which workers are meeting or exceeding the standard of performance required in an effort to promote constructive behaviors. Mwema and Gachunga (2014) discovered that evaluation of employees’ performance does not only assist organizations to identify training needs and influence employees to meet performance targets, but also assist in encouraging them to continue to excel, which result in increased in employee’s productivity.

**Rewarding good performance**

Organizational rewards are regarded as one of the most powerful motivational ways of influencing employees to perform well in the organization (Cummings & Worley, 2009). The findings revealed that rewarding good performance during the course of the year by giving high performers the privilege to knock off early or by adding extra days on their annual leave instead of relying solely on giving workers bonuses based on their performance at the end of the year can encourage workers to engage in constructive deviant behavior. Salah (2016) discovered that positive significant relationships existed between different types of reward systems and suggested that organizations should try to implement possible combination of different types of reward systems in order influence high employees’ performance.
Provision of training

The research revealed the importance of equipping workers with necessary skills to enable them to go extra miles when performing their duties. In support of this, Halawi and Haydar (2018) found that providing training to employees benefit both employees and organizations; employees benefit with new acquired skills which result in inner satisfaction while organizations benefit with quality output. Spanuth and Wald (2017) emphasised that continuous training does not only improve employees’ job knowledge and ability to perform their duties, but can also assist in heightening the employees’ problem-solving skills as well as opening opportunities for employees to be innovative and creative.

Supervisors’ support

The results show that the support workers get from their supervisor can assist in encouraging workers to behave in a constructive deviant way, with the purpose of increasing their contributions to benefit the entire organization. Thus, the support that the workers get from their supervisors makes it possible for them to perform, which eventually assist in making the organization the “high-performance” organization (Cummings & Worley, 2009). The “high-performance” organizations are able to adapt to the rapidly changing demands from the external environment (Baloyi et al., 2014).

Degree of autonomy

The findings revealed the importance of providing workers with some degree of autonomy in executing their duties to motivate them to engage in constructive deviant behavior. Morrison (2006) discovered that employees who are provided with some degree of autonomy to control their own duties and solve problems when performing their duties are more likely to engage in constructive deviant behaviors. Gallos (2006) emphasised that the degree of autonomy that an employee gets, influences job satisfaction and job performance while Malinowska and Tokarz (2020) discovered that employees’ job autonomy positively associates with their work engagement.

Opportunity to utilize knowledge and skills

Cummings and Worley (2009, p. 379) defined an employee knowledge and skills as “the education and experience levels” which an employee possesses. The participants suggested that the management should provide workers with the opportunity to utilize their skills. There seemed to be underutilization of skills, especially in the low-wage sectors such as the farming sector (Wright & Sissons, 2012). Hence, it was recommended that organization should provide room for employees to utilize their knowledge and skills in order to assist their organization to gain a competitive advantage.

Proper placement

Proper placement involves placing workers in positions which they will be able to perform and excel (Sarinah et al., 2016). The results of this study discovered that identifying the most committed and hard-working temporary workers in different positions and then considering them first when permanent positions prevail can assist to promote constructive behaviors. Sarinah et al. (2016) discovered that employee placement significantly influenced employees’ performance.

Promotion of teamwork

Organizations that value teamwork are those that encourage the use of teams in accomplishing their objectives (Cummings & Worley, 2009). The practices involving the promotion of teamwork were identified as one of the managerial practices useful in encouraging constructive deviant behaviors. Ali et al. (2019) indicated that in an attempt to gain competitive advantage, organizations tend to progressively move towards the introduction of teamwork. Such actions are considered to be “a creative solution for contemporary market challenges” (Ali et al., 2019, p. 115).

Promoting good work relations

The research participants suggested that in order to encourage workers to engage in constructive deviant behaviors, the management should promote good relations at the workplace. Thus, when good relationship exists between workers and their supervisor, supervisors will be able to consider workers’ needs. They also reported that good relationship between workers and their supervisors will make it possible for supervisors to take advises from subordinates and be willing to learn from their subordinates. Harmonious relationship between co-workers and between workers and their supervisors was found to influence employees’ job satisfaction (Abun et al., 2018).

Workers’ participation

Workers’ participation is also known as employee involvement, and it entails engaging employees in order to have their voice when making decisions about their own work (Cummings & Worley, 2009; Griffin et al., 2019). The participants proposed that workers should be involved in setting goals and making decisions that affect their work and their lives as well as in suggesting methods of improving performance. This could assist in motivating employees to strive to realise organizational objectives. In support of workers’ participation, Griffin et al. (2019) asserted that involving workers in decision making creates a situation which would make workers to willingly pursue organizational goals as opposed to being forced to accomplish organizational goals.
Promotion refers to vertical upward movement from the lower to the higher job, and it is usually accompanied by the combination(s) of increased duties, responsibilities, autonomy and authority (Nel & Werner, 2014). The participants proposed that promotional opportunities should be available for those with potential and those who are multi-skilled. Thus, supervisors should encourage workers to be multi-skilled in order to stand a better and fair chance to be promoted. Promotion was found to have significant and positive impact on job satisfaction, morale and work productivity (Ali & Ahmed, 2017; Saharuddin & Sulaiman, 2016). Workers who perceive that there are fair promotion opportunities in their organization are more likely to work harder, faster and smarter; thus, engage in constructive deviant behaviors. This is linked to the assumptions of organizational justice theory (Yen & Teng, 2013).

Rewards for long service

Provision of rewards for long service was proposed by the research participants as another way that the management can use to influence the behaviour of workers in a constructive manner. Edenred (2020) emphasised the importance of providing today’s employees with personalized and modernized long service reward that would make them feel valued. The provision of rewards for log service is regarded as an organisational action that promotes organizational commitment, which is regarded as one of the antecedents of employees’ engagement in constructive deviant behavior (Griffin et al., 2016).

Promoting whistle blowing

The research participants proposed that making whistle blowing a culture through anonymous whistle blowing can encourage workers to engage in constructive deviant behavior. This means that the management should seek ways to protect the identity of whistle blowers in order to encourage workers to report wrong doings at the workplace. Klaas et al. (2012) emphasised that employees are more likely to feel comfortable when anonymous whistleblowing system is used because they fear retaliation. Making whistle blowing an organizational culture closely relates to creating an organizational ethical culture. Defined as a system of shared values that contain ethics which affect the behavior of employees, organizational ethical culture is regarded as one way of promoting constructive behavior at the workplace (Nafei, 2018).

Provision of work clothing, equipment and safety gears

The participants suggested the provision of workers with appropriate work clothing, bearing the organization’ logo as well as appropriate safety gears in order to encourage workers to behave in a constructive manner. An individual’s clothing is reported to have influence on how others perceive a person as well as how one perceives oneself (Slepian et al., 2015). Provision of safety gears is considered of utmost importance in farming as agriculture sector is regarded as one of the most hazardous occupations globally (Park et al., 2009).

Consistency in the application of rules and procedures

The consistency in the application of rules and procedures was reported to be a strategy that can promote positive behaviors. Le Roux (2014) emphasised the importance of organizations to be consistent in the manner in which discipline has been applied in the past as well as between two or more employees found to have committed the same misconduct simultaneously. A study conducted by Knight and Ukpera (2014) in South Africa found that employees perceived inconsistencies in the manner in which organizations applied disciplinary procedures. They suggested that it is of utmost importance for the organizations to consistently apply discipline and treat employees with fairness because it enhances employees’ morale and motivation. Consistency in the application of rules and procedures is linked to one of the organizational justice dimensions, procedural justice (Cropanzano & Molina, 2015; Williamson & Williams, 2011).

Equitable distribution of work

The equitable distribution of work among workers was suggested as the important managerial practice to promote constructive behaviors. Participants reported that in order to influence the behavior of workers in a positive manner, they need to feel that they are receiving the same treatment. Therefore, there should be equitable distribution of work among workers who are doing the same job. This is in line with the equity theory, especially internal equity. Internal equity refers to the extent to which people doing similar work and performing similarly in the organization are rewarded in the same manner (Griffin et al., 2016). When employees perceive equity in terms of work distribution and rewards thereof, they are more likely to engage in constructive behaviors (Ryan, 2016).

Implications

The findings of this study suggest that understanding and promotion of constructive deviance may yield positive results for the agriculture industry, benefiting both workers and their organisation. The psychological well-being of workers may be enhanced, including increased levels of self-esteem and a sense of psychological empowerment (Avey et al., 2010; Hamed, 2010; Rahman et al., 2020; Seibert et al., 2011; Yildiz et al., 2015; Youssef & Luthans, 2007). These may sequentially result in improved productivity, organizational commitment, job satisfaction and sustainable practices, reduced costs and promotion of ethical culture in the agriculture industry (Nafei, 2018; Permarupan et al, 2013; Sharma, 2022; Sharma & Chillakuri, 2023).
Conclusions

Management of employees’ behavior is of utmost importance in any organization as organizations rely on employees to effectively achieve their objectives. This study’s findings reveal various forms of constructive deviant behaviors that farmworkers are likely to engage in, as well as possible managerial strategies to encourage such behaviors. Promotion of constructive workplace deviance in the farming sector could not only assist towards addressing challenges in the sector but also contribute positively towards assisting the African continent to rise and flourish. However, the qualitative approach adopted in this study has its own limitations. The researcher’s subjectivity influenced by one’s frame of reference could have directly or indirectly influenced the results.

As the main purpose of conducting a qualitative study is to gain in-depth insights about the phenomenon understudy in a particular context from a small sample, the research findings cannot be generalized to the entire farming sector. The use of a narrative method implies that participants relied on their ability to recall incidents relating to constructive workplace deviance, opening a room for recall bias. The self-reporting during interviews could have open room for bias linked to social desirability. Nevertheless, this study’s findings assist to fill the gap in relation to the limited research on employees’ behavior and management practices in the farming sector. It is recommended for scholars to conduct studies aimed understanding and diagnosing work-related behaviors in the agriculture industry. Future research should focus on a larger scale by conducting studies that would make it possible for the findings to be generalized to the agriculture industry at large.

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References


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