Service Employees’ Job Demands and Two Types of Deviance: The Moderating Role of Organizational Resources

By Eva K. Hammes and Gianfranco Walsh

Service employees represent an important part of the service itself, and their behaviour shapes customer outcomes. However, they do not always engage in organizationally desired behaviours and thus may detrimentally affect service marketing outcomes. Examining the reasons why employees might engage in deviant behaviours is therefore highly important. In prior studies of antecedents of employee deviance, scant research addresses the different types of deviance or the effects of organizational resources. Drawing on psychological contract breach theory, this study proposes a model linking two job demands (mental pressure, perceived customer unfriendliness) with two types of service employee deviance (process and general workplace deviance), while considering the moderating role of organizational resources (perceived organizational support, supervisor knowledge). The results reveal that the two moderators weaken the effect of the job demands on employee deviance. These findings underscore the important and insufficiently explored role of organizational resources in buffering the detrimental effect of job demands, with implications for service marketing and management research and practice.

1. Introduction

From a customer’s perspective, service employees represent the service (Biter et al. 1990), such that they shape customer evaluations and largely determine a service organization’s success. If service employees act in a way that deviates from workplace rules, the deviance thus can threaten the firm (Bennett and Robinson 2000). In particular, when service employees exhibit “voluntary behaviour that violates organizational norms and that harms organizational functioning and organizational members’ benefits” (Robinson and Bennett 1995, p. 556), their deviant behaviour is not accidental but intentional (Bordia et al. 2008). Service employee deviance is of interest to services marketing since deviance can negatively influence service marketing outcomes such as customer satisfaction and trust. Prior research suggests a range of reasons that employees might deviate, such as a lack of motivation to act in accordance with norms (Kaplan 1975) or organizational factors like supervisor monitoring or job complexity (Chiu and Peng 2008). In most cases though, an employee’s deviant behaviour implies dissatisfaction with the job or perceived injustice (Bennett and Robinson 2000). Such drivers can be conceptualized as causes of a psychological contract breach (Guest 1998). That is, a psychological contract between the employee and the employing organization represents the unwritten rules of their relationship, including the employee’s belief about the organization’s obligations (Rousseau 1995). Any perceived breach of this psychological contract, resulting from the organization’s failure to meet its obligations, thus might encourage deviant behaviour by the employee (Morrison and Robinson 1997).

Research related to employee behaviour in the field of service marketing and management has progressed steadily in recent years. In prior research devoted to investigating the antecedents and consequences of employ-
ees’ deviant behaviour, two streams emerge. The first deals with the antecedents of deviance (e.g., Berry et al. 2007), such as when Walsh (2014) distinguishes between extra- and intra-organizational drivers. The second stream pertains more to the consequences of employee deviance and, to a lesser extent, to contingencies of the antecedents-outcomes relationships (Bordia et al. 2010). For example, Chiu and Peng (2008) show that a perceived psychological contract breach relates positively to both interpersonal and organizational deviance by employees and that an employee’s hostile attributions strengthen the relationship between psychological contract breaches and employee deviance. Across these two streams though, research into the moderating effects of the relationship between workplace deviance and its antecedents remains sparse (Bordia et al. 2008). Some scholars note employees’ personality traits (Colbert et al. 2004) or emotions (Fox et al. 2001) as moderators; however, they did not consider the potential moderating effects of an organization’s actions, which could buffer or mitigate the triggers of employee deviance (see Tab. A1 in the appendix). Moderators influence the direction and strength of a relationship (Baron and Kenny 1986) and also help explain when or for whom a relationship applies (Frazier et al. 2004). Considering organizational moderators that might affect the relationship between employee deviance and its antecedents in the form of two job demands (mental pressure and perceived customer unfriendliness) therefore can offer insights into possible interventions service firms can undertake to avoid or alleviate harmful behaviours. Accordingly, we investigate the moderating role of two potential buffers: perceived organizational support and supervisor knowledge. For service marketers and managers, it is important to establish what role, if any, organizational resources such as perceived organizational support and supervisor knowledge play in buffering the effects of job demands on service employee deviance, especially in cases when employee behaviour might negatively affect the customer experience.

Drawing on Guest’s (1998) psychological contract model, which distinguishes causes, content, and consequences of psychological contracts, we propose that employees’ deviant behaviour is a consequence of the contract breach by the organization. The content is the reciprocal promises provided by both the organization and the employee (Guest 2004; Kotter 1973). The organization’s contribution therefore constitutes an important means to influence the consequences, such that it can induce or inhibit employees’ deviant behaviour. Whereas prior research has differentiated between organizational and interpersonal deviance (e.g., Bennett and Robinson 2000), we argue that behaviour targeted against the organization is more likely to cause costly harms to the firm (Bordia et al. 2008; Chiu and Peng 2008), so we distinguish between two kinds of organizational employee deviance: process and general workplace deviance. In our study context, process refers to the employee’s efforts to thwart prescribed processes (i.e., reporting customer complaints) and neglect normative actions that help the organization improve its service (Luria et al. 2009). Process deviance is highly relevant to service marketing and management because it is felt by customers and thus may detrimentally affect customer outcomes. General workplace deviance describes the range of deviant behaviours that harm the organization and its members, such as deliberate loafing on the job (Bennett and Robinson 2000). This type of deviance may affect customers indirectly as a consequence of employees’ reduced performance levels. We argue that it is important to consider both kinds of employee deviance because they may differentially affect key service marketing outcomes.

In our literature review, we develop a conceptual model based on Guest’s (1998) work, linking the antecedents of a psychological contract breach to employee deviance, with organizational resources as moderators. We then test this model with empirical data from an occupational-diverse sample of (n = 270) service employees. Finally, we use the resulting findings to derive theoretical and managerial implications. The current research is important for managerial and conceptual reasons. Managerially, our research is useful because while job demands cannot be avoided, service firms need to know which organizational resources can weaken the deviance-engendering effect of job demands. Conceptually, to gain a better understanding of the antecedents of service employees’ workplace deviance, marketing and management scholars need to move beyond extant bivariate findings and investigate contingencies of the relationships between antecedents and service employee deviance.

2. Theoretical background and hypotheses

To build our conceptual model to analyse employees’ deviant behaviour and its antecedents, we draw on the psychological contract model by Guest (1998, 2004) and the job demands-resources model (Bakker and Demerouti 2007). The content of psychological contracts includes unwritten and implicit rules or reciprocal promises that, from the employee’s perspective, describe what the organization offers, such as fair pay, good working conditions, job security, or organizational commitment in general. A violation of such contracts by the organization implies unmet promises, which likely leads to the employee’s dissatisfaction (Chiu and Peng 2008). This psychological contract breach in turn can motivate the employee to restore a balance by reducing positive or increasing negative behaviour (Turnley et al. 2003). Thus, a violation of the psychological contract by the organization may induce the employee to commit contract violations, in the form of deviant behaviours. The job demands-resources model (Bakker and Demerouti 2007) has become one of the most widely-used job stress models. The model premises that employee well-being and health, as well as performance outcomes, result from a
balance between positive (i.e., resources) and negative (i.e., demands) job characteristics (Schaufeli and Taris 2014).

Although some prior research considers psychological contract breaches between an organization and its employees (e.g., Bordia et al. 2010; Guest and Conway 2002), only one study investigates the organization’s psychological contract breach as an antecedent of deviant employee behaviour (Chiu and Peng 2008). Most studies concentrate on other antecedents (see Table A1 in the appendix). For example, Aquino et al. (1999) find an influence of perceptions of interactional justice within an organization; they also note that negative emotions relate positively to deviant behaviour. Several studies emphasize the importance of organizational factors too (e.g., Harris and Ogbonna 2002, 2006). For example, in their meta-analysis of the antecedents of counterproductive behaviour in organizations, Lau et al. (2003) differentiate multiple organizational aspects, such as supervisor monitoring, job complexity, or prosperity, that can serve as antecedents of employees’ counterproductive behaviours.

With regard to the role of moderators in the relationship between deviant employee behaviour and its antecedents, Colbert et al. (2004) identify conscientiousness, emotional stability, and agreeableness as moderators between positive perceptions of the work situation and workplace deviance, as well as between organizational support and interpersonal deviance. Mitchell and Ambrose (2007), investigating the influence of abusive supervision on workplace deviance, determine that reciprocity beliefs moderate this relationship. Furthermore, Fox et al. (2011) report that job stressors and negative emotions relate positively to counterproductive work behaviours, whereas trait anger, trait anxiety, and autonomy do not moderate this relationship. As we noted previously, Chiu and Peng (2008) cite an employee’s hostile attributional style as a moderator of the relationship between psychological contract breaches and employee deviance.

As this literature review shows, previous research has investigated antecedents of deviant employee behaviour, but few studies consider moderating effects in this context, and those that do focus on employee-related moderators, rather than the organization’s potential actions. The psychological contract model suggests that examining the moderating role of organizational resources is pertinent though, because such resources may help service firms prevent employee deviance. As we depict in Fig. 1, we anticipate that perceived organizational support and supervisor knowledge moderate the relationships between organizational- and job-level demands (i.e., mental pressure, perceived customer unfriendliness) and two types of employee deviance. We focus on these two antecedents because they represent different aspects of the work situation, which is important for identifying antecedents of deviant behaviour (Colbert et al. 2004).

2.1. Relationships between job demands and employee deviance

Drawing on the job demands-resources model (Bakker and Demerouti 2007), we distinguish two job demands – mental pressure and perceived customer unfriendliness.

**Mental pressure.** Employees perceive pressure when they try to conform with organizational rules and procedures (Hung and Plott 2001). Such job stressors also can lead to emotional exhaustion, such that the working envi-
Hammes/Walsh, Employees’ Job Demands and Types of Deviance: Moderating Role of Organizational Resources

Environment can exhaust employees’ mental resources (Demerouti et al. 2001). Service employees often face conflict as they try to conform simultaneously to customers’ and supervisors’ demands, and such situations can induce mental pressure (Babin and Boles 1996). Psychological or mental depletion likely is associated with deviant behaviour by the employee, including unwillingness to perform job duties (Gorgievski and Hobfoll 2008), such as not reporting customer complaints according to a prescribed process. Service employees experiencing depletion may seek relief by neglecting this job duty, which thwarts the prescribed process and hinders the firm’s ability to improve its service delivery processes and retain customers. Similarly, high mental demands at work might deplete the employee’s resources in such a way that the employee engages in general workplace deviance, such as absenteeism, lazy work habits, or turnover intentions.

H1: Mental pressure relates positively to (a) process and (b) general workplace deviance.

Perceived customer unfriendliness. Just as they do in response to conflicting task demands, service employees confront stressful situations if customers become impatient, are frustrated, or are rude (Walsh 2011). Perceived customer unfriendliness, or “the degree to which a customer is impolite or abrasive toward a service employee” (Walsh 2011, p. 68), thus may lead to employee deviance, because it constitutes a job stressor that may limit an employee’s job performance (Goolsby 1992). These encounters are emotionally draining, such that they can bring about job dissatisfaction and fatigue, prompting employees to respond with behavioural strategies (Walsh 2011). For example, if employees believe unfriendly customers do not deserve the organization’s effort to make amends, they might not report their complaints. Stressful situations involving unfriendly customers also may weaken employees’ motivations to perform their job duties and lead to general workplace deviance (Bennett and Robinson 2000).

H2: Perceived customer unfriendliness relates positively to (a) process and (b) general workplace deviance.

2.2. Moderating effects of perceived organizational support and supervisor knowledge

Considering the importance of employees’ perceptions of how the organization cares for them and the support they receive from supervisors (Colbert et al. 2004; Eisenberger et al. 1986; Ramaswami 1996), we propose that perceived organizational support and supervisor knowledge might attenuate the effect of job demands on deviant behaviour. Specifically, we posit that these two organizational resources weaken the influence of mental pressure and perceived customer unfriendliness on process and general workplace deviance.

Perceived organizational support represents employees’ beliefs about the degree to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al. 1986). If employees get the impression that the organization does not care about their well-being or appreciate their work, they may react by changing their behaviour. Employees reciprocate support when they believe that the organization supports them (Colbert et al. 2004), so we predict that perceived organizational support instead will weaken the effect of mental pressure and perceived customer unfriendliness on process and general workplace deviance.

Prior research also emphasizes the importance of supervisors’ treatment of employees on the employees’ behaviour (e.g., Everton et al. 2007). Supervisor knowledge as a specific form of supervisor support (Walsh 2014) allows supervisors to be supportive toward their subordinates. Knowledgeable supervisors are familiar with the service employee’s daily tasks and job routines. In this context, Fulk et al. (1985, p. 304) argue that “greater supervisor knowledge of subordinate performance provides a stronger basis for a constructive helping role” and “that supervisor knowledge of performance generates subordinate confidence in the supervisor as rater of the performance”. If supervisors display process-related knowledge toward employees and are well-informed about their tasks, employees’ trust in their supervisors increases (Ramaswami 1996). They are less willing and have fewer opportunities to engage in deviant behaviour. Thus, good supervision may weaken the employee’s unwillingness to follow prescribed processes in response to mental pressures and perceived customer unfriendliness. The feeling that the supervisor is knowledgeable and competent, and thus can be relied upon, also should motivate them to perform their job duties as expected.

H3: (a) Perceived organizational support and (b) supervisor knowledge moderate (weaken) the positive effect of mental pressure on process deviance.

H4: (a) Perceived organizational support and (b) supervisor knowledge moderate (weaken) the positive effect of mental pressure on general workplace deviance.

H5: (a) Perceived organizational support and (b) supervisor knowledge moderate (weaken) the positive effect of perceived customer unfriendliness on process deviance.

H6: (a) Perceived organizational support and (b) supervisor knowledge moderate (weaken) the positive effect of perceived customer unfriendliness on general workplace deviance.

3. Method

3.1. Sample and procedures

A small group of service employees (n = 13) participated in a pre-test to ensure face validity of the questionnaire. The ultimate sample for this study consists of German
service employees whose jobs require high, medium, or moderate face-to-face customer contact (Bowen 1990). We used a snowballing technique, in which research assistants had sent a link to an online questionnaire to friends and relatives working in service settings. Participants were briefed about the nature of the study and the data collection procedures before beginning the survey. The chosen data collection technique seemed appropriate because one research goal was to capture employee attitudes as well as personal and social facts (e.g., Zhang et al. 2010). Furthermore, the chosen technique is cost effective and the data sought were not available from public sources. This method yielded a usable sample of 270 service employees, of whom 58% were female. The mean age of respondents was 30.6 years (SD = 10.8) and respondents reported an average job tenure of a little over seven years. Thus, our sample is representative of the broader European service workforce which comprises over 50% women and some 90% of employees aged 25 years and older (Kemekliene et al. 2007). The employees surveyed covered a range of service sectors, including retailing, financial services, and hotels/restaurants.

3.2 Measures

We used multi-item measures for mental pressure, perceived customer unfriendliness, perceived organizational support, supervisor knowledge, process deviance, and general workplace deviance (see Tab. A2 in the appendix), on a seven-point Likert scale (7 = “fully disagree” to 1 = “fully agree”). We also measured several demographic and identifying variables (e.g., business type, work tenure). The mental pressure measure featured six items from Babin and Boles (1996). The four perceived customer unfriendliness items came from Walsh (2011). We measured perceived organizational support with five items adapted from Ramaswami (1996). The four perceived customer unfriendliness items came from Walsh (2011). We measured supervisor knowledge with five items adapted from禳aswami (1996). The process deviance measure included four items adapted from Luria et al. (1999) eight-item short form of Eisenberger et al.’s (1986) original scale. We measured supervisor knowledge with five items adapted from Lynch et al.’s (1999) eight-item short form of Eisenberger et al.’s (1986) original scale. We measured supervisor knowledge with five items adapted from Luria et al. (1999) eight-item short form of Eisenberger et al.’s (1986) original scale. We measured perceived organizational support with four items adapted from Robinson et al. (2009). Finally, for general workplace deviance, we used eight items from Bennett and Robinson (2000).

3.3 Assessment of measures

To assess the measures, we performed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on the six model constructs (mental pressure, perceived customer unfriendliness, process deviance, general workplace deviance, perceived organizational support, supervisor knowledge; see Fig. 1). The composite reliabilities ranged from .74 to .88, exceeding the recommended minimum of .7 (Bagozzi and Yi 2012). With the exception of perceived customer unfriendliness, the average variances extracted (AVE) for all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of .5 (.50 to .61; see Tab. 1). In support of discriminant validity, all the squared covariances were smaller than the related AVE (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Tab. 1 contains the interconstruct correlations and square roots of the AVEs.

Because we used a single data source to assess the independent variables, dependent variables, and moderators, our results may be affected by common method variance (CMV) (Bagozzi and Yi 2012). As suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003), we assessed the potential for CMV with several different procedures. First, we conducted Harman’s single-factor test with an exploratory factor analysis without rotation in SPSS 22. The single factor that emerged accounted for only 30.1% of the variance, so no single factor dominated. We also applied an unmeasured common latent factor method, based on the assumption that an unobserved latent variable represents an aggregate of all the manifest variables in the study and may account for a substantial proportion of the variance if CMV exists. When we compared the standardized regression weights for the CFA models, with and without a common latent factor (Podsakoff et al. 2003), the greatest difference among the standardized regression weights was .25. Thus, CMV does not appear to be an issue for this study.

In addition, we controlled for employee job tenure because job experience is associated with learning (Hunter and Thatcher 2007), suggesting that, when working under high job demands, employees with longer tenure may be better able to direct their attention to tasks that are central to their job than those with shorter tenure.

4. Results

We used multiple regression analyses to test our hypotheses regarding the direct relationships between the two job demands (mental pressure, perceived customer unfriendliness) and the two types of service employee deviance (process and general workplace deviance), as well

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean / SD</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>(5)</th>
<th>(6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Mental pressure</td>
<td>6.08 (.90)</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Perceived customer unfriendliness</td>
<td>4.39 (1.38)</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Process deviance</td>
<td>1.76 (1.11)</td>
<td>-.60</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) General workplace deviance</td>
<td>5.37 (1.36)</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-.28</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Perceived organizational support</td>
<td>4.73 (1.45)</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>-.30</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Supervisor knowledge</td>
<td>2.93 (1.37)</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>-.50</td>
<td>-.27</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Diagonal elements are the square root of AVE.
Hammes/Walsh, Employees’ Job Demands and Types of Deviance: Moderating Role of Organizational Resources

as an SPSS macro developed by Hayes (2013) to test the moderating effects of perceived organizational support and supervisor knowledge.

Using the PROCESS macro, we conducted eight regression analyses with the job demands mental pressure and perceived customer unfriendliness as the predictors, supervisor knowledge and perceived organizational support as the moderators, and the two forms of deviance as the outcome variables. The results are presented in Table 2.

The analyses of the main effects of mental pressure and perceived customer unfriendliness on the two types of employee deviance show interesting results. In support of H1a and H1b, mental pressure has a positive effect on both process deviance and general workplace deviance. However, the effect of perceived customer unfriendliness on process deviance is not significant, thus H2a must be rejected. For general workplace deviance, though, the effect of perceived customer unfriendliness is positive and significant, supporting H2b. These surprising results may be attributable to the psychological processes underlying the different types of deviance. While process deviance is an active choice to not report customer complaints, general workplace deviance is a more passive behaviour.

The mental pressure × perceived organizational support interaction exerted a significant effect on process deviance (β = .08, p < .05). A simple slope analysis (Aiken and West 1991) revealed that, as predicted by H3a, for low levels of perceived organizational support (one standard deviation below the mean), the relationship between mental pressure and process deviance was highly significant (β = .28, p < 0.01) whereas this relationship was non-significant for high levels of perceived organizational support. These findings allow us to accept H3a.

The mental pressure × supervisor knowledge interaction exerted a significant effect on process deviance (β = -0.14, p < 0.001). To clarify this interaction, we applied a simple slope analysis. For low levels of supervisor knowledge (one standard deviation below the mean), the relationship between mental pressure and process deviance was highly significant (β = 0.29, p < 0.001) whereas this relationship was non-significant for high levels of supervisor knowledge, in support of H3b.

Results showed that the interaction effect of mental pressure and perceived organizational support on general workplace deviance is not significant (β = .01, n.s.), leading to the rejection of H4a. This non-significant interaction effect possibly comes about because in field studies, interaction effects are often associated with low statistical power (Aguinis 1995). Furthermore, the interaction effect of mental pressure and supervisor knowledge on general workplace deviance is not significant (β = -.01, n.s.), indicating that, formally, H4b also has to be rejected. Although no significant interaction between mental pressure and supervisor knowledge on general workplace deviance was ap-

parent (F[3,272] = 7.83, p > 0.01), post hoc analyses indicated the presence of a moderating effect. To assess the nature of the interactions, we followed the procedures described by Aiken and West (1991) to identify the level of the moderator (supervisor knowledge) at which the direct effect of mental pressure on general workplace deviance was significant. We took one standard deviation above and one below the mean to represent high and low levels of supervisor knowledge. For employees that indicate low levels of supervisor knowledge (one standard deviation below the mean), higher mental pressure led to higher levels of general workplace deviance, compared with high levels of supervisor knowledge (one standard deviation above the mean; β = 0.22, n. s. vs. β = 0.26 p > 0.01). Although we are not able to formally support H4b, these findings are consistent with H4b.

The effect of perceived customer unfriendliness on process deviance when perceived organizational support is included as a moderator is mildly significant (β = 0.05, p < .10). Thus, H5a is supported.

However, the interaction effect of perceived customer unfriendliness and supervisor knowledge on process deviance is not significant (β = -.04, n. s.). The interaction effect is negative, indicating a buffering of the effect when perceived organizational support, which is consistent with H5b although it cannot be formally supported.

In support of H6a, the interaction effect of perceived customer unfriendliness and perceived organizational support on general workplace deviance is significant (β = -.09, p < .05). Moreover, a simple slopes analysis shows that for employees that indicate low levels of organizational support (one standard deviation below the mean) perceived customer unfriendliness led to higher levels of general workplace deviance (β = .37, p > 0.001) than for employees who indicated a level of perceived organizational support (.12, n. s.).

Similar results were found for H6b. The interaction effect of perceived customer unfriendliness and supervisor knowledge on general workplace deviance is significant and negative (β = -.08, p < .05), indicating a buffering of the effect of perceived customer unfriendliness on general workplace deviance. In addition, the simple slope analysis shows that, again, for those employees who indicated low levels of supervisor knowledge, the effect of perceived customer unfriendliness on general workplace deviance was stronger (β = .34, p > 0.001) than for those who indicated high levels of supervisor knowledge (β = .13, n. s.).

5. Discussion

This study has attempted to show that organizational resources (perceived organizational support and supervisor knowledge) can diminish the influence of job demands (mental pressure and perceived customer unfriendliness) on two important types of employee deviance targeted
### Table 2: Analysis results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Hypothesis supported?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Y (Process Deviance)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1 (main effects)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Step2 (main and interactive effects)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X (MP)</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z (POS)</td>
<td>-.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X × Z (Interaction)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R² = .11, F(2, 273) = 18.60, p &lt; .001</td>
<td>R² = 13, F(3, 272) = 14.10, p &lt; .001, ΔR² = .01, F(1, 272) = 4.59, p &lt; .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y (Process Deviance)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1 (main effects)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Step2 (main and interactive effects)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X (MP)</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z (SK)</td>
<td>-.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X × Z (Interaction)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R² = .15, F(2, 273) = 35.57, p &lt; .001</td>
<td>R² = .20, F(3, 272) = 23.30, p &lt; .001, ΔR² = .05, F(1, 272) = .05 n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y (General Workplace Deviance)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1 (main effects)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Step2 (main and interactive effects)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X (MP)</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z (POS)</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X × Z (Interaction)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R² = .07, F(2, 273) = 11.75, p &lt; .001</td>
<td>R² = .08, F(3, 272) = 7.83, p &lt; .001, ΔR² = .002, F(1, 272) = .05 n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y (General Workplace Deviance)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1 (main effects)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Step2 (main and interactive effects)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X (MP)</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z (SK)</td>
<td>-.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X × Z (Interaction)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R² = .14, F(2, 273) = 24.09, p &lt; .001</td>
<td>R² = .15, F(3, 272) = 16.60, p &lt; .001, ΔR² = .05, F(1, 272) = 1.54 n.s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: MP = mental pressure, PCU = perceived customer unfriendliness, POS = perceived organizational support, SK = supervisor knowledge.
toward the organization (process deviance and general workplace deviance). Employee deviance is especially important to service marketers and managers, since deviant employee behavior has deleterious effects on customer-related organizational performance (e.g., Walsh 2014).

5.1. Theoretical implications

With the prediction that service employees frame job demands as psychological contract breaches, such that they lead to deviant behavior, we investigate the moderating role of organizational resources. Our results show that mental pressure relates positively to process deviance, such that greater mental pressure makes it more likely that employees fail to report customer complaints. This finding supports prior research that suggests that a sense of being psychologically depleted prevents employees from being able to fulfill their job duties (Goolsby 1992; Gorgievski and Hobfoll 2008). Mental pressure also relates positively to workplace deviance, though this link is not as strong as the link to process deviance. We reason that the different consequences for the organization, deriving from the two forms of deviance, might explain this finding. Process deviance pertains to the customer complaint-handling process and is important to any service firm’s success (Luria et al. 2009; Tax et al. 1998). Failing to report complaints that could have been handled and led eventually to positive marketing outcomes causes harm to the organization, possibly even more than absenteeism or lazy work habits. The negative consequences for the service firm are more direct and severe than those associated with general workplace deviance, in that they can induce customer switching behaviors or negative word of mouth (DeWitt and Brady 2003). Another possible explanation for the different outcomes could be that general deviance differs in terms of volition. Process deviance may be an active decision to harm the organization. The employee consciously decides whether to report the complaint. General workplace deviance, such as performing duties less diligently, instead may represent a more passive behavior (Duffy et al. 2002). Mental pressure results from the workplace situation (cf. difficult customers, who represent situational job demands), so a conscious decision to punish the source of this pressure, with deviant behaviors targeting the organization, seems plausible (Aquino et al. 2001).

Contrary to our assumption, perceived customer unfriendliness was not related to process deviance, even though the job demand and the outcome both seem closely linked to the customer. This unexpected finding might arise because the cause involves an external problem, such that incidents with frustrated customers enable the organization to present support to employees. Perhaps service scripts or other organizational controls override employees’ tendency to respond to demands posed by the customer with deviance. In this case, our finding also contradicts research that predicts that job demands undermine an employee’s job performance (e.g., Goolsby 1992). The link between perceived customer unfriendliness and general workplace deviance is positive though, as we predicted.

With regard to the moderating effects, we anticipated that both perceived organizational support and supervisor support, in the form of supervisor knowledge, would weaken the effects of mental pressure and perceived customer unfriendliness on process and general workplace deviance.

In line with prior research (e.g., Everton et al. 2007), the results show that the relation between mental pressure and process deviance was buffered when we included supervisor knowledge as a moderator. A similar result was found for the relationship between perceived customer unfriendliness on process deviance, when supervisor knowledge was included as a moderator. It seems that when the supervisor uses his or her knowledge to help employees handle difficult, demanding situations, those employees feel more motivated to follow prescribed processes, even if the demands are high (Ramaseswami 1996). The moderating effect of supervisor knowledge on the effects of mental pressure and perceived customer unfriendliness on general workplace deviance are non-significant though. These results reinforce the close connection between the more active form of process deviance and the organization. It appears that process deviance is a more active form than general workplace deviance (Duffy et al. 2002) and that the influence of supervisor knowledge is more powerful in the context of this more active form.

In contrast to prior research that predicts a negative effect of organizational support on employee deviance (e.g., Eisenberger et al. 1986), perceived organizational support strengthens the relationships between mental pressure and perceived customer unfriendliness on process deviance in our study. Thus, when perceived organizational support exists, employees react to perceived customer unfriendliness by not following prescribed processes (i.e., not reporting customer complaints). This result is counterintuitive and may point to an interesting phenomenon: in cases of high levels of perceived organizational support employees may feel they do not ‘own’ the task process and as a result, their responsibility for the process slips. In other words, the more support is provided, the less likely employees are to enact key processes, thus contributing to process deviance. Process deviance concerns the complaint-handling process. Although not handling complaints harms the organization, it also harms the customer, since the organization does not react to his/her complaint. As perceived organizational support is a rather positive behavior of the organization towards its employees, a possible explanation might be that upon learning that the organization stands behind them, employees are more confident in not complying with customers’ requests and therefore engage in process deviance.
5.2. Managerial implications

For service managers, the present study shows that job demands can induce employee deviance, but the effects of these job demands also can be buffered through organizational resources directed at the employee. Three managerial implications thus stem from our findings. First, high job demands (especially mental pressure), which often require sustained physical and emotional effort, are linked to harmful employee behavior. Service firms need to manage job demands more effectively, such as through job rotations (Campion et al. 1994) or training to help frontline employees gain the skills needed to cope with job demands (Noe and Schmitt 1986) and to deliver a positive customer experience.

Second, to elicit norm- and rule-congruent employee behavior, service firms might reduce job demands. Frontline service employees are key to operational efficiency and service quality, but their job demands can have draining effects and may prompt rule-incongruent behavior. We recommend that service managers try to reduce the job demands of service employees, such as by reducing task complexity (e.g., streamlining service delivery processes) or trying to alter customer behavior. For example, service firms could make organizational norms more salient to customers (e.g., signs in the servicescape that say, “We appreciate a friendly climate in this store”).

Third, the results highlight the “dangerous” nature of perceived organizational support. Employees may feel too confident in their behavior due to the support of their organization and may not comply with the legitimate requests of customers by not following prescribed rules in relation to complaints. Thus, service organizations need to deploy this resource carefully and think about the different double-edged effects organizational support may elicit.

5.3. Limitations and further research

Our study has several limitations that offer avenues for further research. Methodologically, we used cross-sectional, self-reported data from an occupationally diverse sample, which may have resulted in CMV. However, CMV is unlikely to affect moderated relationships (Evans 1985), and the results of our analysis suggest it was not a serious concern for our data (Podsakoff et al. 2003). Still, our study could be strengthened through the use of predictive measurements.

Moreover, we focused on two outcome variables, in terms of employee deviance. Both process and general workplace deviance have been examined in emotional labor research (e.g., Bennett and Robinson 2000; Luria et al. 2009), which led us to consider them particularly relevant for our study. Additional research could include other types of employee deviance related to service employees’ job demands, such as absenteeism or employee aggression.

Finally, we considered two organizational moderators—perceived organizational support and supervisor knowledge. The relationship between employee job demands and deviance conceivably could be moderated by other organizational-level variables, such as the service climate (Schneider et al. 1998). We hope continued studies explore the moderating role of such variables.

References


**Keywords**

Buffers, Employee Deviance, Organizational Resources, Psychological Contract Breach, Service Marketing.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Sample/procedure</th>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>Dependent variables</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
<th>Moderator(s) considered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aquino et al. (1999)</td>
<td>Survey, n = 245</td>
<td>Distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, negative affectivity</td>
<td>Employee deviance (organizational and interpersonal)</td>
<td>Perceptions of interactional justice are strong predictors of deviant behaviour (negative relationship). Direct relationship between negative affect and deviant behaviour (positive relationship).</td>
<td>Bennett and Robinson's (2000) measure of workplace deviance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berry et al. (2007)</td>
<td>Meta-analysis</td>
<td>Big five, organizational citizenship behaviors, organizational justice, demographics</td>
<td>Interpersonal deviance (ID), organizational deviance (OD)</td>
<td>The separation of self-report workplace deviance scales into ID and OD dimensions is useful. ID and OD were much more strongly correlated with the Big Five personality dimensions of agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability than with extraversion or openness to experience. ID and OD were more strongly correlated with the Big Five personality dimensions of agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability than with extraversion or openness to experience. OCB variables exhibited moderate to strong negative correlations with ID and OD. Organizational justice variables exhibited low to moderate negative correlations with ID and OD. Demographic variables did not have strong correlations with either ID or OD. Organizational interventions aimed at one form of deviance cannot be assumed to have comparable effects on the other.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiu and Peng (2008)</td>
<td>Questionnaires, n = 233 (employees and supervisors) Surveys with four samples: 1: n = 239 (store managers and assistant managers) 2: n = 319 (non-management employees) 3: n = 173 (sales and customer service workers) 4: n = 122 (clerical workers)</td>
<td>Psychological contract breach, hostile attributional style, Perceived organizational support, agreeableness</td>
<td>Employment deviance</td>
<td>Psychological contract breach relates positively to two forms of employee deviance (interpersonal and organizational). Positive perceptions of the work situation are negatively related to workplace deviance. Perceptions of the developmental environment are negatively related to withholding effort. Perceived organizational support is negatively related to interpersonal deviance</td>
<td>Yes (hostile attributional style) Yes (conscientiousness, emotional stability, and agreeableness)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colbert et al. (2004)</td>
<td>In-depth interviews with organizational members, n = 182</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fox et al. (2001)</td>
<td>Survey, n = 292 (employees of different organizations)</td>
<td>Job stressors, perceived justice, negative emotional reactions to work</td>
<td>Counterproductive work behaviour (CWB)</td>
<td>Two types of CWB (against organization and against people) may follow separate paths. Job stressors (including perceived injustice) and negative emotions relate to CWB.</td>
<td>Yes (trait anger, trait anxiety, and autonomy) No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harris and Ogbonna (2002)</td>
<td>Survey, n = 259 (frontline customer-contact employee)</td>
<td>Individual characteristics, management control efforts, perceived labour market conditions</td>
<td>Service sabotage</td>
<td>Employee effects influence on service and organizational performance. Seven main antecedents of service sabotage: risk-taking proclivity, need for social approval from work colleagues, desire to stay with current firm, extent to which service sabotage occurs, perceived cultural control, exposure to and interactions with external customers, and extent of labour market fluidity. Whatever the individual motivations for service sabotage, customer-contact employees intentionally sabotage and thus gain “benefits,” individually in the form of increased self-esteem and collectively through improved team spirit. Managers must recognize the latent needs of frontline staff for status and self-esteem. Five consequences of service sabotage: self-esteem, team spirit, negative relationships with rapport with customers and functional quality, functional quality, and company performance. Antecedents of employees’ counterproductive behaviour in organizations include personal differences (job satisfaction, perceived stress, habits, demographic characteristics) and situational differences (organizational: supervisor monitoring, group influence, organizational anti-theft policy, organizational characteristics; work: job complexity, high-risk occupations, task independence; and contextual: employment rate, economic prosperity, opportunity to steal). Abusive supervision influences employees’ willingness to engage in negative behaviour. Significant main effect of negative reciprocity beliefs on all types of deviance.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lau et al. (2003)</td>
<td>Meta-analysis</td>
<td>Job satisfaction, job dissatisfaction, job insecurity, ability to be on time, demographics</td>
<td>Counterproductive behaviors (CPB)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell and Ambrose (2007)</td>
<td>Survey, n = 427</td>
<td>Abusive supervision</td>
<td>Workplace deviance, negative reciprocity beliefs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (reciprocity beliefs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Cronbach’s α</th>
<th>AVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental pressure (Babin and Boles 1996)</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| The company provides me with clear, planned goals for my work.  
I know what my responsibilities are.  
I know exactly what is expected of me.  
I sometimes have to bend a rule or police in order to carry out an assignment.  
I receive incompatible requests from two or more people.  
I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it. | | |
| Perceived customer unfriendliness (Walsh 2011) | 0.63 | 0.41 |
| Customers are generally very friendly and pleasant.  
Customers lose their temper quickly.  
Customers often take my comments and deeds in the wrong way.  
Customers do not greet me or my colleagues. | | |
| Process deviance (Luria et al. 2009) | 0.73 | 0.51 |
| I do not report to management about incidents in which customers complain about serious problems.  
I do not report to my direct manager about problems customers encounter even if a customer has not told me that he or she wants to complain about service.  
I do not feel comfortable discussing problems encountered with a dissatisfied customer with my direct manager.  
I am not willing to tell my direct manager about difficulties I had when serving customers. | | |
| General workplace deviance (Bennett and Robinson 2000) | 0.87 | 0.50 |
| I often take additional breaks or longer breaks than approved by the management.  
I often put less of an effort into my job than I could.  
I often come late to work without permission.  
I don’t always act in accordance with my supervisors instructions.  
I often work slower than I could.  
I sometimes behave insolently toward customers and colleagues with who I have contact during work time.  
I often make fun of my colleagues.  
At work I am often rude toward customers and colleagues. | | |
| Perceived organizational support (Eisenberger et al. 1986) | 0.84 | 0.58 |
| My employer is concerned about my well-being.  
My employer is concerned about my general satisfaction at work.  
The organization cares about my opinions. | | |
| Supervisor knowledge (Ramaswami 1996) | 0.89 | 0.61 |
| My supervisor knows how to accomplish the work I normally encounter.  
My supervisor is intimately familiar with the day-to-day decisions related to my work.  
My supervisor has developed an excellent working knowledge of my job.  
I am confident that my supervisor can assess my job performance.  
My supervisor can specify the most important variables to monitor my work. | | |

*Note:* AVE = average variance extracted.