

# Understanding organizational deviance: An interactive model of perceived job characteristics and personality\*

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## Abstract

The present study proposed and tested a model of organizational deviance, which incorporated characteristics of both the work environment and the individual. Specifically, job design and personality were examined as determinants of organizational deviance. The model incorporated both direct and joint effects of the study variables. Data from 662 individuals were analyzed using moderated regression. Results showed personality traits of conscientiousness and neuroticism and job characteristic of identity predicted organizational deviance. Conscientiousness moderated the impact of variety and neuroticism moderated the impact of identity on organizational deviance. The findings have implications for job design, selection and recruitment of organizational members.

*Key words:* Organizational deviance, job characteristics, big five personality traits.

## 1. Introduction

A serious problem that organizations face today is employee misconduct (Bowling and Lyons, 2015; Ferris, Brown, and Heller, 2009; Robinson, Wang, and Kiewitz, 2014; Spector, 2011; Spector and Fox, 2010). Employees may engage in a wide variety of counterproductive and destructive behaviors that may hurt the

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organization as well as its employees (Bennett and Robinson, 2000; Robinson and Bennett, 1995). Examples include a diverse assortment of behaviors such as aggression, violence, vandalism, sabotage gossiping, tardiness, and cyberloafing, among others (Bennett and Robinson, 2000; Gruys and Sackett, 2003; Robinson and Bennett, 1995; Sackett and DeVore, 2001; Spector, Bauer, and Fox, 2010). These seemingly disparate behaviors share some common characteristics: They are volitional; they infringe upon organizational norms; and they harm or intend to harm the organization and/or individuals associated with it (Spector, Fox, Penney, Bruursema, Goh, and Kessler, 2006). Such behaviors are called workplace deviance (Bennett and Robinson, 2000) and categorized into two on the basis of their target. Those that target the organization are called organizational deviance, whereas those that target specific individuals are called interpersonal deviance (Bennett and Robinson, 2000; Berry, Ones, and Sackett, 2007; Dalal, 2005; Gruys and Sackett, 2003; Hershcovis et al., 2007; Robinson and Bennett, 1995). The focus of the present study is on organizational deviance, namely destructive acts towards the organization. Some examples include stealing from the organization, damaging company equipment, intentionally wasting time and other resources, bad mouthing the organization, and sharing sensitive and confidential information with third parties.

Organizational deviance is a pervasive and costly problem for organizations (Bennett and Robinson, 2000; Eschleman, Bowling, and LaHuis, 2015; Ferris, Brown, and Heller, 2009; Vardi and Weitz, 2004). For instance, 95% of the retail and service employees in the USA admitted to stealing from their employers (Stewart, 2015) and in 2018 the average dishonest employee cost U.S. retailers \$1,361.37, which was more than three times larger than the cost of an average shoplifting case (Hayes International, 2018). The problem is not limited to the retail industry. A study conducted by the American Society of Employers (2018) estimates that 20% of every dollar earned by a U.S. company is lost to employee theft.

Unfortunately, theft is not the only form of workplace deviance that organizations should be concerned with (Spector et al., 2006). A survey conducted in the USA found that cyberloafing was ubiquitous across employees from all age cohorts (Udemy, 2018) and inefficiencies caused by an employee wasting time through such activities cost an organization about 34 per cent of the employee's annual salary (Gallup, 2017). In addition to its immediate effects on the bottom-line, organizational deviance, also, has long-term consequences through reduced employee morale, lower commitment, higher intentions to quit, and increased stress (Appelbaum, Deguire, and Lay, 2005; Eschleman et al., 2015; Ilie, Penney, Ispas, and Iliescu, 2012; Kelloway, Francis, Prosser, and Cameron, 2010; Robinson et al., 2014; Sackett and DeVore, 2001).

In light of the potentially serious implications of organizational deviance, understanding factors triggering such behavior is a critical research topic (Robinson et al., 2014). The present study contributes to extant research by presenting a comprehensive model of organizational deviance which includes situational determinants (i.e., job design) and individual differences (i.e., personality). Further, the proposed relationships are put to a test in a large sample of employees across a variety of jobs. Thereby, the current study aims to enable a thorough understanding of triggers and causes of organizational deviance and will have implications for improving organizational performance through minimizing organizational deviance by designing jobs and selecting and recruiting organizational members.

## 2. Theoretical background

The field of organizational behavior (OB) is concerned with predicting employee's job performance, an employee's overall contribution to the organization (Porter & Schneider, 2014). Employees contribute to their organizations in multiple ways. One important contribution is through performance of task behaviors for which an employee was hired to perform (Borman, 2004; Dalal, 2005; Organ, 1997; Organ, Podsakoff, and MacKenzie, 2006; Rotundo and Sackett, 2002). Performance of task behaviors have a direct impact on the organization's technical core and make up the inrole (task) dimension of job performance (Borman, Bryant, and Dorio, 2010; Coleman and Borman, 2000; Rotundo and Sackett, 2002). Employees also engage in discretionary behaviors that go beyond their core task responsibilities and that support the social and psychological context of the organization (Borman, 2004; Borman, Bryant, and Dorio, 2010; Coleman and Borman, 2000; Borman, Penner, Allen, and Motowidlo, 2001; Dalal, Lam, Weis, Welch, and Hulin, 2009; Katz and Kahn, 1978; Kelloway et al., 2010; Organ, 1997; Organ et al., 2006; Podsakoff Whiting, Podsakoff, and Blume, 2009; Spector et al., 2010). Contextual performance, as such behaviors are commonly labeled, enhances an organization's functioning (Borman, 2004; Borman, Bryant, and Dorio, 2010; Coleman and Borman, 2000; Organ et al., 2006).

Traditionally, the focus of OB research had been on inrole and contextual performance (Borman, 2004; Dalal, 2005; Organ et al., 2006, Robinson et al., 2014). More recently, this focus shifted to the dark side of employee behavior, namely workplace deviance (Appelbaum et al., 2005; Colbert, Mount, Harter, Witt, and Barrick, 2004; Gruys and Sackett, 2003; Sackett and DeVore, 2001; Spector, 2011). Numerous studies examined potential antecedents of workplace deviance in general and organizational deviance specifically (e.g., Berry et al., 2007; Colbert et al., 2004; Eschleman et al., 2015; Ferris et al., 2009; Hershcovis et al., 2007; Penney, Hunter, and Perry, 2011; Spector, 2011; Vardi and Weitz, 2004). These

studies focused on either one of two general categories of predictors: situational factors such as attributes of the task or individual factors such as personality traits (Dalal, 2005; Marcus and Schuler, 2004; van den Berg and Feij, 2003). This literature has shown some linkages, although inconsistent, between individual differences and deviant behaviors (e.g., Penney et al., 2011), as well as aspects of the work situation and deviant behaviors (e.g., Ferris et al., 2004). However, the inconclusive findings suggest that a complete understanding of the determinants of organizational deviance requires models that incorporate not only situational factors but also individual differences, as well as their interaction (Lee and Allen, 2002; Martinko, Gundlach, and Douglas, 2002; Sackett and DeVore, 2001; Spector and Fox, 2002, 2005).

There is limited research in the literature that studies both direct and indirect effects of situational factors (e.g., job characteristics) and individual attributes (e.g., personality) on organizational deviance (Colbert et al., 2004; Eschleman et al., 2015; Ferris et al., 2009; Spector and Fox, 2002) and, therefore, the current study is an attempt to contribute to extant literature by proposing such a comprehensive model of organizational deviance. The proposed model, discussed below, includes direct as well as joint effects of job design (e.g., autonomy, significance) and personality variables (e.g., conscientiousness, neuroticism) in explaining organizational deviance.

### *2.1 Perceptions of job characteristics as predictors of organizational deviance*

Deviant behavior, in general, is conceived of as a response to situational triggers (Krischer, Penney, and Hunter, 2010; Penney et al., 2011; Robinson and Bennett, 1995; Spector and Fox, 2002, 2005). Specifically, stressor-emotion model (Spector and Fox, 2002, 2005) suggests that deviant behavior occurs in response to stressors in the work environment. Stressors refer to workplace events or stimuli encountered by employees that induce negative emotions (Spector, 1997). Some examples to stressors include role ambiguity, work overload, interpersonal conflict, and unfair treatment (Aquino, Lewis, and Bradfield, 1999; Berry et al., 2007; Miles, Borman, Spector, and Fox, 2002; Penney et al., 2011; Spector, 1997). According to the stressor-emotion model, perceptions of situational stressors cause negative emotions such as anger and frustration leading to deviant behaviors as a means of expressing or resolving these negative emotions (Spector and Fox, 2002, 2005).

Stressor-emotion model emphasizes the importance of individuals' perceptions of the situational variables, noting that it is the perceptions and attributions that lead to experience of negative emotions, which in turn trigger deviant behaviors (Colbert et al., 2004; Spector and Fox, 2005). Along these lines, Colbert et al. (2004), demonstrate that perceptions of lack of organizational support

and developmental opportunities were associated with organizational deviance. Some stressors are especially relevant for explaining organizational deviance (Berry et al., 2007; Colbert et al., 2004; Bennett and Robinson, 2000). For instance, stressors that are organization-based such as lack of perceived organizational support are more likely to trigger organizationally oriented destructive acts such as damaging company property, whereas stressors that originate from interpersonal interactions such as interpersonal conflict are more likely to provoke destructive acts that target individuals (Berry et al., 2007; Colbert et al., 2004). One job stressor, which is especially relevant for organizational deviance, is job design, the tasks or activities that employees are expected complete on a daily basis (Marinova, Peng, Lorinkova, Van Dyne, Chiaburu, 2015; Oldham and Fried, 2016). Little research examined the effects of employees' perceptions of job design on organizational deviance.

The scarcity of research on job design-deviant behavior relationship is peculiar. The design of jobs employees are assigned is one of the most important elements of the work environment (Marinova et al., 2015; Oldham and Fried, 2016; Parker, 2014; Raja and Johns, 2010; van den Berg and Feij, 2003). The early job design research began in response to detrimental consequences of job simplification. Research on classical management approaches demonstrated that when jobs were simple and routine, employees engaged in destructive behaviors such as tardiness, withholding effort, and sabotage to such an extent that the costs of such behavior nullified the efficiencies gained by simplification and standardization (Oldham and Fried 2016). Various job design models were proposed to deal with these deviant behaviors and improve performance (e.g., Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman, 1959). Past research linked job design with employee motivation, satisfaction, as well as well-being (Fried and Ferris, 1987; Campion and McClelland, 1993; Chiu and Chen, 2005; Demerouti, Bakker, and Halbesleben, 2015). A recent meta-analysis showed that job design was associated with stress and exhaustion, suggesting that working on jobs with certain characteristics can impact employee mental health (Humphrey, Nahrgang, and Morgeson, 2007).

Hackman and Oldham's (1976) Job Characteristics Model (JCM) is one of the most widely studied models of job design (Fried and Ferris, 1987; Oldham and Fried, 2016; Parker, 2014; van den Berg and Feij, 2003). JCM proposes that presence of five task characteristics make jobs more satisfying and motivating for employees: Autonomy is the degree to which job provides freedom in carrying out work, variety is the extent to which performance of a job requires use of different skills, identity is the degree to which the job involves completing a whole and identifiable piece of work, significance is the degree to which the job impacts

others' lives, and feedback is the degree to which the job provides performance information (Hackman and Oldham, 1976).

JCM suggests that jobs that are challenging, meaningful, and that provide latitude and variety lead to positive work outcomes (Fried and Ferris, 1987; Hackman and Oldham, 1980; Humphrey et al., 2007). JCM received quite a lot of attention and some propositions of the model such as the effects of job characteristics on motivation, job satisfaction, and affective commitment were empirically supported (Bakker et al., 2014; Bakker and Demerouti, 2007; Christian et al., 2011; Fried and Ferris, 1987; Humphrey et al., 2007; Judge, Bono, and Locke, 2000; Oldham and Fried, 2016). However, overall evidence regarding the effects of job characteristics on behavioral dimensions of performance, such as organizational deviance, is inconclusive, indicating a need for further research in this area (De Varo, Li, and Brookshire, 2007; Oldham and Fried, 2016; Parker, 2014).

Jobs that incorporate the five characteristics identified by JCM (i.e., variety, identity, significance, autonomy, feedback) are considered to be enriched (Hackman and Oldham, 1976; Herzberg et al., 1959). Enriched jobs are associated with positive psychological states such as experiencing meaning, responsibility, and knowledge of results (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Humphrey et al., 2007). They are intrinsically motivating and satisfying (Hackman and Oldham, 1976; Raja & Johns, 2010). On the other hand, if employees perceive that their jobs are impoverished with respect to these characteristics, they may experience boredom, decreased intrinsic motivation, and hindered growth. Consequently, employees may feel frustration and anger towards the organization, increasing the likelihood that they engage in organizational deviance (Spector and Fox, 2002, 2005).

Autonomy refers to the level of control and freedom an employee has on a given job (Hackman and Oldham, 1976). Employees who evaluate their jobs to have high autonomy believe that they can decide when, how, and where to conduct their work (Marinova et al., 2015). According to JCM, presence of autonomy in a job leads to experiencing a feeling of responsibility which is associated with positive affect (Hackman and Oldham, 1976). When employees think that their jobs lack autonomy, they may feel that their work situation is not under their control, they are dependent on others for important outcomes, their efforts do not matter, and they are not responsible for the results for which they are appraised. As a result, they tend to experience more stress and frustration. The extant literature depicted that autonomy was a predictor of inrole performance and absenteeism (Humphrey et al., 2007; Parker, 2014). Further, research on aggression depicted that desire to restore a sense of personal control was a key cause of aggression and vandalism (Hershcovis et al., 2007; Spector and Fox, 2005). However, studies that examined the link between autonomy and organizational deviance had inconsistent findings

(Fox et al., 2001). Thus, it is expected that the stress and frustration associated with having low autonomy on the job will trigger organizational deviance.

A job with variety involves a number of different tasks and requires the use of a variety of skills. In such jobs, employees frequently engage in different activities and experience low monotony and boredom (Hackman and Oldham, 1976). When employees perceive their jobs to have identity, they experience a feeling of doing something whole, identifiable, and visible, which in turn lead to positive emotions such as pride (Hackman and Oldham, 1976; Humphrey et al., 2007). A job high in identity provides a sense of closure to the employees (Colquitt, LePine, and Wesson, 2013). Significance is the degree to which the job significantly impacts others, inside or outside the organization (Hackman and Oldham, 1976). When employees perceive high significance, they feel that what they do makes a difference (Humphrey et al., 2007). According to JCM, when employees perceive that their jobs offer them diverse activities, challenge, and opportunity to develop their skills and perform duties that are important, they experience their work to be meaningful (Hackman and Oldham, 1976; Humphrey et al., 2007; Raja and Johns, 2010). Experiencing meaningfulness is associated with positive and pleasurable feelings such as joy, excitement, interest, inspired, and pride. A perception of lack of meaningfulness, on the other hand, is associated with monotony, routineness, boredom, and restricted developmental opportunities which are likely to be associated with a variety of negative feelings such as frustration, resentment, disappointment, distress, and anger that may trigger organizational deviance. Thus, it is expected that the negative emotions associated with having low meaningfulness (identity, variety, significance) on the job will trigger organizational deviance (Spector and Fox, 2005).

Feedback involves conveying of information regarding employee's task performance (Belschak and Den Hartog, 2009). According to JCM, feedback component of job design leads to knowledge of results which incites positive emotions (Hackman and Oldham, 1976). Feedback enables employees to understand the results of their efforts and, as a result, employees can learn, set goals, and take corrective action to improve their performance (Humphrey et al., 2007). Feedback, especially when it is positive is associated with positive feelings such as pride and happiness (Belschak and Den Hartog, 2009). A job design that lacks feedback, on the other hand, prevents the employee from attaining relevant knowledge to learn and improve, develop competencies, and set goals. Such an obstruction is likely to be associated with negative feelings such as frustration, resentment, and anger and, in turn, organizational deviance (Spector and Fox, 2005). Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**Hypothesis 1:** Perceptions of low a. autonomy, b. variety, c. identity, d. significance, e. feedback are positively associated with organizational deviance.

In sum, drawing upon stressor-emotion model (Spector and Fox, 2005), when employees have unfavorable perceptions of their jobs, they may experience negative emotions. These negative emotions may encourage display of deviant behaviors (Spector and Fox, 2005). Another important area of research concerns whether deviant behaviors are predicted by the individual (Penney & Spector, 2005; Sackett and Walmsley, 2014; Salgado, 2002). Research on deviant behaviors suggests that such behavior is caused by not only external situational factors but also individual differences (Colbert et al., 2004; Eschleman et al., 2015; Spector, 2011). Although JCM incorporates an individual difference, namely growth-need strength (Hackman and Oldham, 1976), results of the research examining the effect of growth-need strength were inconclusive (Fried and Ferris, 1987; Parker, 2014; Oldham and Fried, 2016), suggesting that other individual characteristics should also be investigated.

## *2.2. Personality traits as predictors of organizational deviance*

A large body of research examined the link between individual differences, such as personality, and job performance (Berry et al., 2007; Dalal, 2005; Fox and Spector, 2005; Judge, Heller, and Mount, 2002). This research shows that personality variables are useful in predicting job performance and especially its extrarole components such as organizational deviance (Ones, Dilchert, Viswesvaran, and Judge, 2007; Li et al., 2014; Spector, 2011). A dominant framework in the study of personality is McCrae and Costa's (1987) five-factor model of personality (the Big Five) (Ashton, Lee, Goldberg, and deVries, 2009; Barrick and Mount, 1991; Costa and McCrae, 1992; Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1990; Judge and Ilies, 2002; McCrae et al., 2008; Spector, 2011). According to the Big Five, personality varies along five broad dimensions, each of which is comprised of lower-level specific traits: neuroticism (e.g., anxious, nervous, fearful), conscientiousness (e.g., punctual, self-disciplined, well organized), agreeableness (e.g., courteous, helpful, sympathetic), extraversion (e.g., sociable, talkative, assertive), and openness (e.g., curious, intellectual, artistic) (Goldberg, 1992; McCrae and Costa, 1987).

The great majority of studies that examine the personality-deviant behavior association employed the meta-analysis method and focused on overall, aggregate measures of deviance (e.g., Salgado, 2002; Sackett and Walmsley, 2014). These studies usually and found that of the Big Five traits neuroticism, conscientiousness, and agreeableness are conceptually relevant to explain workplace deviance (Berry et al., 2007; Sackett et al., 2006; Sackett and Walmsley, 2014). However, these studies are limited as they do not consider that workplace deviance encompasses two conceptually distinct components that are conceptually linked to different traits (Berry et al., 2007; Bowling et al., 2011; Colbert et al., 2004). The scarce amount

of research that examined whether personality traits would differentially correlate with the two dimensions of workplace deviance (e.g., Dalal, 2005; Mount, Johnson, Ilies, and Barrick, 2002), depicted that conscientiousness was especially a strong predictor of organizational deviance, whereas agreeableness was a strong predictor of interpersonal deviance and neuroticism was conceptually relevant for both dimensions (Bowling et al., 2011; Colbert et al., 2004; Sackett et al., 2006). To ensure that the organizational deviance model proposed is most parsimonious and theoretically sound, the personality traits of neuroticism and conscientiousness, for which empirical support is evident, should be used as the theoretically relevant personality traits (Mount et al., 2002).

Conscientiousness covers accomplishment-striving traits such as diligence, self-discipline, ambition, organization, dependability, and responsibility (Costa and McCrae, 1992; Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1992; Saucier, 1994). Past research depicted conscientiousness to predict job performance across occupations (Barrick and Mount, 1991). Individuals high on this trait are hardworking persevering, punctual, and attaining task goals is a way of self-expression for such individuals (Barrick, Stewart, and Piotrowski, 2002). They are also rule-abiding and they avoid impulsive behavior (Colbert et al., 2004). Organizational deviance, in contrast, involves withholding effort, breaking organizational rules, and impulsive reactions (Bennett and Robinson, 2000; Gruys and Sackett, 2003; Robinson and Bennett, 1995; Sackett et al., 2006). Highly conscientious individuals are not likely to engage in such behaviors. Thus, conscientiousness is expected to be negatively related to organizational deviance.

Neuroticism refers to an individual's emotional stability and proneness to negative affectivity. It encompasses traits such as anxious, depressed, insecure, nervous, and fearful (Bolger and Zuckerman, 1995; Costa and McCrae, 1992; Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1992; Kaplan, Bradley, Luchman, and Haynes, 2000; Saucier, 1994). Individuals low on neuroticism are calm, secure, resilient, and steady, whereas those who are high on neuroticism are prone to frequently experiencing unpleasant emotions such as anger, hostility, annoyance, and nervousness (Barrick and Mount, 2000; Costa and McCrae, 1992; Goldberg, 1992). Building on stressor-emotion model (Spector and Fox, 2005), it can be inferred that individuals low in neuroticism are more likely to respond with organizational deviance as they try to cope with these unpleasant emotions (Bolger and Zuckerman, 1995). Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**Hypothesis 2a:** Conscientiousness is negatively associated with organizational deviance.

**Hypothesis 2b:** Neuroticism is positively associated with organizational deviance.

In sum, in addition to perceptions of work stressors, individual differences such as personality traits also explain organizational deviance. However, the above discussed research focuses only on the direct effects of work situation and individual differences. This is a major gap in the extant research (Colbert et al., 2004; Eschleman et al., 2015; Ferris et al., 2009) and the current study attempts to address this gap by incorporating the joint effects of perceptions of work situation and personality.

### *2.3 Joint effects of perceived job characteristics and personality*

Several studies examined deviant behaviors relationship with personality as well as job characteristics but these studies were limited to examining only the direct effects. However, complex employee behavior, such as organizational deviance is not only influenced by situational and individual factors operating independently but also their joint impact should be considered (Li, Fay, Frese, Harms, and Gao, 2014; Spector, 2011). Thus, interactive effects of work situation and personality should also be considered to develop a comprehensive understanding of organizational deviance. According to Colbert et al. (2004) employees are likely to demonstrate deviant behavior in response to negative perceptions of the work situation only if such behavior is consistent with their personality traits. Thus, employees are more likely to engage in deviant behavior when they have unfavorable perceptions of the work situation and when their personality traits do not constrain the expression of deviant behavior (Colbert et al., 2004).

Following Colbert et al. (2004), it is proposed that conscientiousness is a constraint on the perceived job characteristics-organizational deviance relationship. Specifically, individuals who have poor perceptions of their job characteristics are expected to respond through organizational deviance if they are low in conscientiousness. Those individuals who are high in conscientiousness, on the other hand, will restrain from engaging in deviant acts toward the organization although they may perceive that their jobs are poorly designed. Individuals who are high in conscientiousness tend to be achievement-striving (Barrick and Mount, 1991). They are hardworking, task-oriented, and rule abiding individuals (Costa and McCrae, 1992; Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1992; Saucier, 1994). Attaining good performance at their work is important means of self-expression for such individuals (Barrick and Mount, 1991). Engaging in deviant acts such as withholding effort, breaking organizational rules, damaging organization's property are contrary to the motivations and disposition of highly conscientious individuals. In sum, even when highly conscientious individuals perceive their jobs to be dull, monotonous, low in motivating potential, and they feel blocked, uninspired, and dissatisfied they still may not engage in organizational deviance, because such acts

are not consistent with their accomplishment-driven nature. The following hypotheses are proposed:

**Hypothesis 3:** Perceptions of job characteristics (a. autonomy, b. variety, c. significance, d. identity, e. feedback) and conscientiousness interact to influence organizational deviance, such that the relationship between perceptions of job characteristics and organizational deviance are stronger when conscientiousness is low than when it is high.

Neuroticism also constrains the job characteristics perceptions and workplace deviance relationship. Specifically, individuals who have poor perceptions of their job characteristics are expected to respond through organizational deviance if they are high in neuroticism. When jobs are poorly designed, employees may experience boredom, alienation, and distress (Humphrey et al., 2007). The negative emotions that arise as a result of unenriched jobs when coupled with the individual's predisposition to experience negative affectivity are more likely to trigger deviant behavior. Individuals who are high in neuroticism are anxious, tense, and insecure (Costa and McCrae, 1992; Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1992). They are more likely to feel dissatisfied, frustrated, and resentful (Barrick and Mount, 2000) and coupled with the dissatisfaction and boredom arising from their jobs, they are more likely to see deviant acts as a way to express their negative feelings. Those low in neuroticism are calm, collected and secure (Costa and McCrae, 1992; Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1992), they are less likely to display organizational deviance even when they perceive their jobs as poorly designed. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**Hypothesis 4:** Perceptions of job characteristics (a. autonomy, b. variety, c. significance, d. identity, e. feedback) and neuroticism interact to influence organizational deviance, such that the relationship between perceptions of job characteristics and organizational deviance is stronger when neuroticism is high than when it is low.

### 3. Method

#### *3.1. Sample and procedure*

Data for the current study came from 662 adults working in various occupations in the public sector. The paper-and-pencil surveys were sent through contact individuals. Survey packages included informed consent forms. Before data collection, approval from the university human subjects committee was attained. All measures were taken to guarantee confidentiality of participants' personal information. The surveys can be found in Arkan (2016). A total of 1000 surveys were distributed. 800 were collected back. Of these 138 were returned entirely or

major parts incomplete. After these surveys were discarded, the response rate was 66%. The mean age of participants was 37.59 (SD = 9.73), 39.5% were women, 60.7% held at least an undergraduate degree.

### 3. 2. Measures

*Organizational Deviance:* The dependent variable of the study was operationalized using the Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (Spector et al., 2006). The scale consists of two sub-scales and ten items. Five of the items capture interpersonal deviance and five capture organizational deviance. The checklist asks participants the question of “How often have you done each of the following things on your present job?” and items are rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = “Never” to 5 = “Everyday” and 3 = “Once or Twice a Month”. The checklist was translated and adjusted to Turkish by Öcel (2010). In the present study, to measure organizational deviance the relevant sub-scale consisting of five items were used. An example item was “Purposely wasted your employer’s materials/supplies” Cronbach alpha of this measure was 0.65.

*Perceived Job Characteristics:* Perceived job characteristics was measured using Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) (Hackman and Oldham, 1980). JDS has 15 items and five sub-scales that measure each one of the job characteristics. For each job characteristic, there are three items in total. A five-point rating scale was utilized with 1 = “Very Inaccurate” 3 = “Moderately Accurate”, and 5 = “Very Accurate.” A sample item from JDS was “The job requires me to use a number of complex or high-level skills.” The Turkish version of the scale was developed by Varoğlu (1986). The Cronbach alpha of the scale was 0.74.

*Personality:* To measure the two personality traits, conscientiousness and neuroticism, the relevant sub-scales of the Big Five Inventory (John and Srivastava, 1999) were used. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which items described them on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = “Strongly Disagree” to 5 = “Strongly Agree” and 3 = “Neither Agree nor Disagree”. Conscientiousness was measured by nine items. An example is “I see myself as someone who is a reliable worker.” Neuroticism was measured by eight items. An example is “I see myself as someone who can be tense.” Turkish version of the inventory was developed by Sümer and Sümer (2002). Cronbach alpha scores for conscientiousness and neuroticism scales are 0.66 and 0.71 respectively.

#### 4. Results

Before the data analyses and test of the study hypotheses, a regression analysis was conducted in order to select the control variables to be included in further analyses. Past research on deviant behavior identified a number of demographic variables (e.g., age, tenure, education, gender) as significantly associated with deviance. Organizational deviance was regressed on these demographic characteristics. Results indicated that only age ( $\beta = -.168$ ,  $p < .05$ ) was significantly associated with the dependent variable and therefore it was used as a control variable in the hypotheses testing. Table 1 displays the results of this regression analysis.

Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics and intercorrelations of the study variables. Organizational deviance was significantly associated with age, such that as individuals got older they engaged less in organizational deviance. As expected, organizational deviance was negatively correlated with perceived job characteristics of identity, significance and feedback, as well as conscientiousness trait and positively correlated with neuroticism trait. Thus, participants who perceived their jobs to have significance, identity and feedback reported lower levels of organizational deviance, individuals who were low in conscientiousness and those who were high in neuroticism reported higher levels of organizational deviance.

**Table 1**

Effects of Age, Gender and Education on Organizational Deviance ( $N = 662$ )

Variables	$\beta$	SE	t	R <sup>2</sup>	F	Df
Age	-.106*	.002	-2.732	.008	2.781*	658
Gender	-.030	.031	-.762			
Education	-.019	.019	-.499			

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

**Table 2**  
Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations (N = 662)

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	37.59	9.99									
2. Organizational Deviance	1.23	0.38	-.111**	.114**	.145**	.142**	.148**	.196**	.140**	-.150**	
3. Autonomy	3.01	0.85		.000	-.014	-.149**	-.083*	-.154**	-.337**	.300**	
4. Variety	3.23	0.96			.255**	.146**	.229**	.277**	.051	-.023	
5. Identity	3.74	0.77				.303**	.285**	.400**	.083*	-.146**	
6. Significance	3.73	0.74					.384**	.516**	.111**	-.112**	
7. Feedback	3.94	0.82						.429**	.088*	-.087*	
8. Conscientiousness	4.21	0.49							.208**	-.214**	
9. Neuroticism	2.31	0.63									-.500**

\*  $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$ .

The hypotheses of the study were tested using the moderated regression procedure (Baron and Kenny, 1986). This procedure involved first regressing the direct effects of independent variables (perceived job characteristics and personality) on the dependent variable (organizational deviance); then testing the full model which also included the interaction effects. All independent variables were mean-centered before calculating the interaction terms (Aiken and West, 1991; Dawson, 2014). Multicollinearity was not an issue as demonstrated by variance inflation factors below 2.00 (Neter, Wasserman, and Kutner, 1989). The results of this regression analysis are depicted in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
Effects of Perceived Job Design and Personality on Organizational Deviance  
( $N = 662$ )

	Variables	$\beta$	SE	t	$R^2$	F	Df
1	Age	-.041	.001	-1.118	.166	17.399**	653
	Autonomy	-.033	.011	.866			
	Variety	.060	.010	1.509			
	Identity	-.106*	.013	-2.485			
	Significance	-.005	.013	-.123			
	Feedback	-.046	.013	-1.001			
	Conscientiousness	-.237**	.020	-5.734			
2	Neuroticism	.194**	.016	4.658	.175	8.772**	643
	Age	-.046	.001	-1.245			
	Autonomy	.034	.011	.893			
	Variety	.076	.010	1.852			
	Identity	-.100*	.013	-2.348			
	Significance	-.008	.013	-.203			
	Feedback	-.039	.014	-.827			
	Conscientiousness	-.244**	.020	-5.807			
	Neuroticism	.182**	.016	4.295			
	A*C	-.002	.025	-.050			
	A*N	-.006	.019	-.133			
	V*C	-.121*	.024	-2.603			
	V*N	.009	.018	.193			
	I*C	-.002	.028	-.037			
	I*N	-.104*	.023	-2.162			
	S*C	-.010	.032	-.214			
	S*N	.015	.024	.312			
F*C	.052	.029	1.028				
F*N	-.027	.025	-.497				

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$

Hypotheses 1a through 1e proposed a negative association between perceived job characteristics (a. autonomy, b. variety, c. significance, d. identity, e. feedback) and organizational deviance. Results indicated that of the five characteristics only identity was significantly associated with organizational deviance. As proposed by hypothesis 1c, identity was significantly and negatively related with organizational deviance ( $\beta = -.100$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Thus, hypothesis 1c was supported. Perceived autonomy, significance, variety, and feedback were not significantly related to organizational deviance and therefore hypotheses 1a, b, d, and e were not supported.

Hypothesis 2a proposed that personality trait of conscientiousness significantly would be negatively and hypothesis 2b proposed that neuroticism would be positively associated with organizational deviance. As predicted conscientiousness had significant and negative impact on organizational deviance ( $\beta = -.244, p < .001$ ) and neuroticism had significant and positive impact on organizational deviance ( $\beta = .182, p < .001$ ). Hence, hypotheses 2a and 2b were supported.

Hypotheses 3a through 3e proposed that conscientiousness would moderate the effects of perceived job characteristics on organizational deviance, such that these effects would be stronger for individuals who were low in conscientiousness compared to those who were high. Results showed that conscientiousness moderated the variety-organizational deviance relationship ( $\beta = -.121, p < .05$ ). Hypotheses 3a, c, d, and e were not supported.

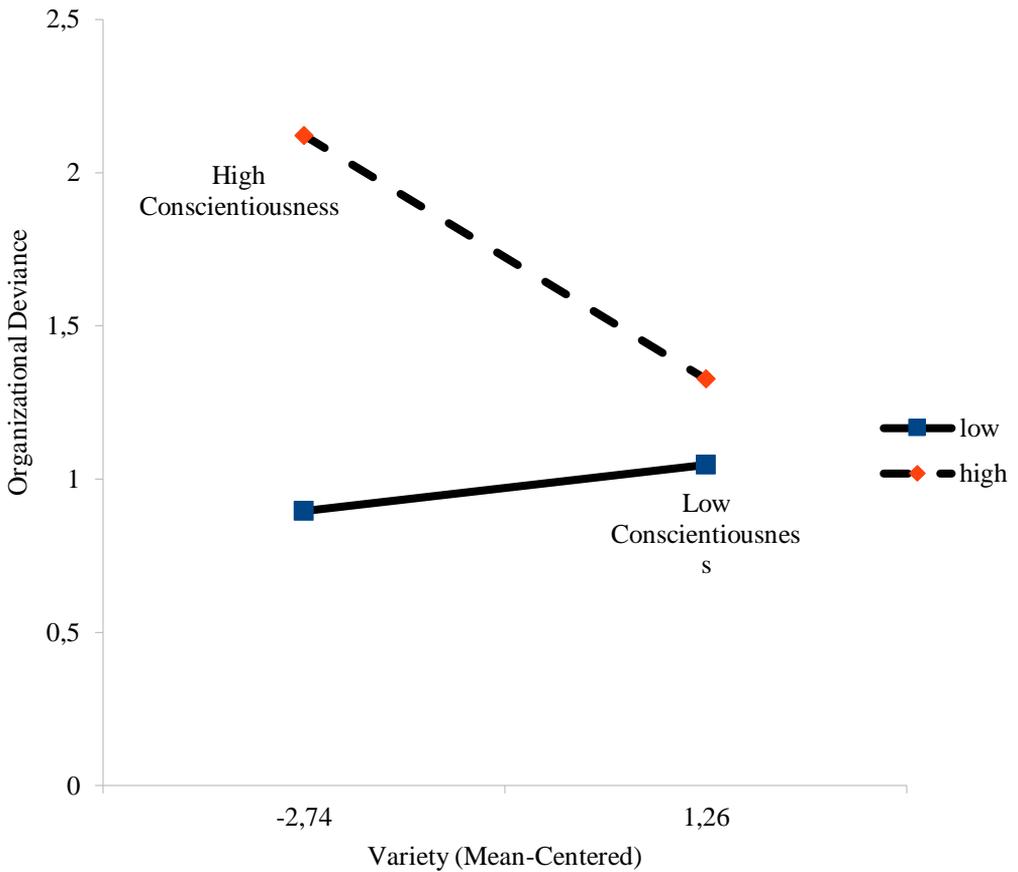
Significant interaction term suggests that the relationship between organizational deviance and variety differ according to the level of conscientiousness. However, to understand the size and precise nature of this effect simple slope tests were conducted and the relationship between organizational deviance and variety was plotted at high and low values of conscientiousness (see Figure 1) (Aiken, and West, 1991; Dawson, 2014). The results showed that although conscientiousness moderated the variety-organizational deviance relationship, the direction of this effect was different from what was hypothesized. Hypothesis 3b proposed that highly conscientious individuals would not engage in organizational deviance even though they perceived their jobs had low variety. Figure 1 shows that for highly conscientious individuals, variety and organizational deviance are negatively associated such that as variety increases deviance decreases ( $b = -0.048, t = -2.095, p < .05$ ). Low conscientious individuals were proposed to be more prone to organizational deviance in response to perceptions of low variety. Figure 1 shows that for low conscientiousness individuals tend to depict organizational deviance as variety increases ( $b = 0.179, t = 2.377, p < .05$ ). These interesting findings will be discussed further in the next section. Hence, hypothesis 3b was also not supported.

Hypotheses 4a through 4e proposed that neuroticism would moderate the effects of perceived job characteristics on organizational deviance, such that these effects would be stronger for individuals who were high in neuroticism compared to those who were low. Results showed that neuroticism moderated only the identity-organizational deviance relationship ( $\beta = -.104, p < .05$ ). Hypotheses 4a, b, c, and e were not supported. The significant coefficient of identity-neuroticism interaction is not enough evidence to support hypothesis 3d. Follow up analysis, similar to the above, revealed that as hypothesized individuals who are high in neuroticism are likely to engage in organizational deviance when they perceive their jobs lack identity ( $b = -0.199, t = -3.1124, p < .05$ ). For individuals low in

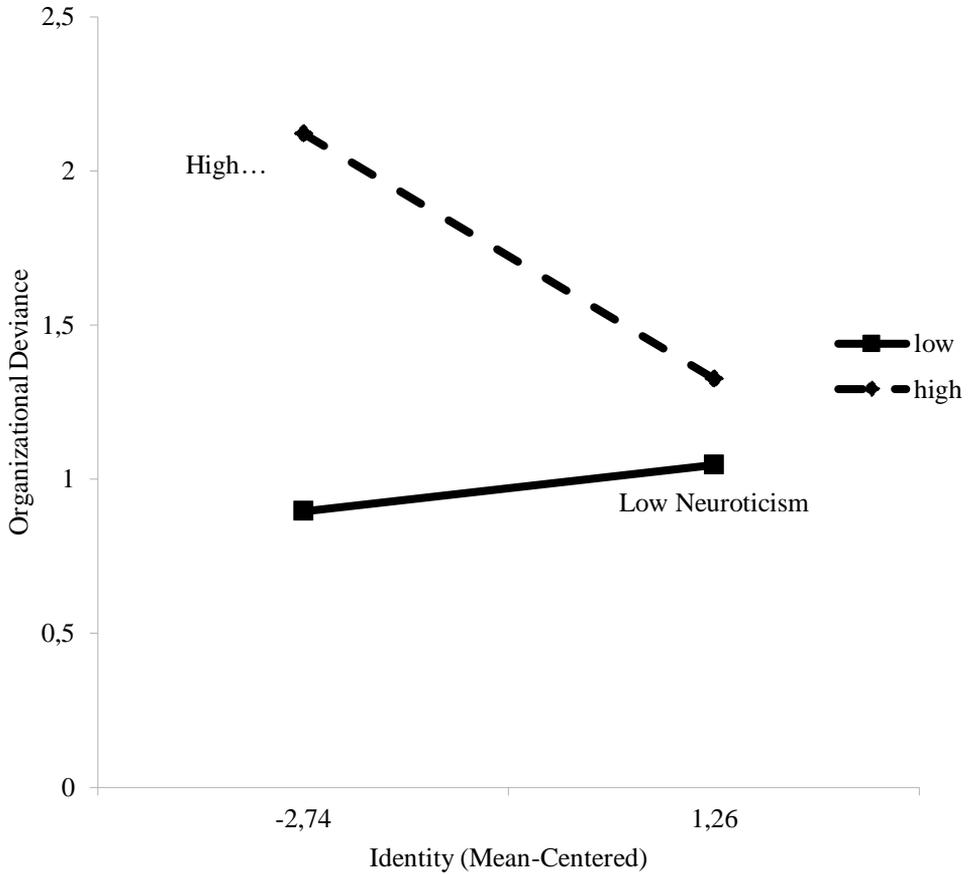
neuroticism, the result of simple slope test was not significant. Thus, as expected, neuroticism trait constrained the display of organizational deviance in response to levels of identity, such that individuals who were high (but not those who were low) in neuroticism responded to perceptions of identity. Hypothesis 3d was supported.

**Figure 1**

Joint Effects of Variety and Conscientiousness on Organizational Deviance



**Figure 2**  
Joint Effects of Identity and Neuroticism on Organizational Deviance



## 5. Discussion

The focus of OB research has been on identifying the factors that influence employees' contribution to their organizations (Porter and Schneider, 2014). Traditionally positive forms of contribution such as inrole performance and contextual performance have been emphasized (Borman, 2004; Dalal et al., 2009; Kelloway et al., 2010; Organ et al., 2006). Recently, this domain is redefined to also include counterproductive and destructive behaviors that harm or intend to harm the organization or its members (Bennett and Robinson, 2000; Gruys and Sacket, 2003; Spector and Fox, 2010). The present study aimed to identify factors

associated with a specific type of such deviant behaviors, namely organizational deviance which target the organization (Berry et al., 2007; Bennett and Robinson, 2010; Dalal, 2005; Gruys and Sacket, 2003; Spector et al., 2006). Drawing upon extant workplace deviance literature and stressor-emotion model (Spector and Fox, 2002; 2005), this study proposed and tested a model of organizational deviance, which incorporated a situational factor (i.e. job design) and an individual difference (i.e. personality).

The present study identified job design, an important facet of the work environment, as a potential work stressor (Spector, 1997). It was proposed that when employees perceived that their jobs lacked certain key characteristics, they might experience negative emotions such as anger, frustration and resentment, which in turn may trigger organizational deviance as a response (Spector and Fox, 2005). In the present study, job design was conceptualized using the JCM, the most widely cited framework in job design literature (DeVaro et al., 2007). Poor levels of the five characteristics as identified by this model were investigated as potential stressors. Thus, employees' perceptions of low levels of autonomy, variety, significance, identity, and feedback were expected to be associated with organizational deviance. This hypothesis was supported only for the design characteristic of identity.

Identity refers to the extent to which a job provides the employee an opportunity to perform a whole, identifiable piece of work such that there is a clear beginning and end with a visible output (Colquitt et al., 2013; Hackman and Oldham, 1976; Humphrey et al., 2007). Identifiable jobs enable employees to experience meaningfulness (Hackman and Oldham, 1976; Humphrey et al., 2007). Employees perceive their work to be valuable and worthwhile which leads to positive feelings such as feeling proud, inspired and enthusiastic. As the findings of the present study indicate such positive feelings are associated with low levels of organizational deviance. When employees perceive that their work is not recognizable and does not have a visible output, they are more likely to see their jobs meaningless and less likely to feel proud and elevated. As they perform their duties, they may not experience a sense of closure, which leads to unpleasant emotions such as frustration and disappointment. These negative emotions that are associated with poor identity may lead to organizational deviance. Thus, as depicted in the present study, when employees perceive that their jobs suffer from poor identity, they are more likely to engage in organizational deviance. In sum, according to the present study, perception of identity is a particularly important situational trigger of organizational deviance. This finding suggests that managers should pay special attention to incorporating identity while designing jobs to decrease deviant behaviors towards the organization.

This study also proposed that organizational deviance might be influenced by individuals' idiosyncratic traits. Specifically, personality traits of conscientiousness and neuroticism were proposed to be especially relevant in predicting organizational deviance. Findings of the present study demonstrated that conscientiousness and neuroticism of the Big Five personality dimensions were important predictors of organizational deviance. Conscientious individuals tend to be diligent, dependable, disciplined and rule abiding (Barrick and Mount, 1991, 2000; Costa and McCrae, 1992; Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1992). The present study showed that such individuals were less likely to engage in destructive behaviors that would harm their organizations. On the other hand, individuals who are high neuroticism are prone to frequently experiencing negative emotions such as distress, frustration, fear, and anger (Barrick and Mount, 1991, 2000; Costa and McCrae, 1992; Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1992).

The present study showed that individuals who were high on this trait were more likely to see deviant acts toward the organization as a means to cope with their negative emotions. These findings point to the importance of incorporating selection measures and screening instruments to ensure that individuals who are hired into the organization are less likely to engage in organizational deviance (Barrick and Mount, 2000). Thus, another way to curtail the occurrence of organizational deviance is through the recruitment of individuals who are predisposed to avoid destructive behaviors aimed at the organization by screening for conscientiousness and neuroticism traits.

Finally, this study conceptualized organizational deviance as reactions to perceptions of work environment within the constraints of individual's personality (Colbert et al., 2004). Specifically, conscientiousness was expected to constrain the perceived job characteristics-organizational deviance relationship, such that individuals who had poor perceptions of their job characteristics were expected to respond through organizational deviance if they were low in conscientiousness. This hypothesis was not supported. However, conscientiousness was found to moderate the relationship between variety and organizational deviance, albeit in different direction than proposed.

The present study showed that for low conscientious individuals, increase in variety provoked organizational deviance, whereas for high conscientious individuals, increase in variety discouraged organizational deviance. Thus, contrary to expectations, low conscientious individuals reacted negatively to increases in variety. For such individuals, perceptions that their jobs included wide array of activities that required the use of different skills did not lead to positive feelings. Rather, because such individuals are not organized, lack discipline, have difficulty in focusing and pursuing goals, they may be overwhelmed with the increase in activities and requisite skills to perform those activities and they may feel like they

are being set up for failure by their organizations. Hence, for individuals low in conscientiousness, increase in variety may create negative feelings such as being overwhelmed and resentment, leading to organizational deviance.

Contrary to expectations, individuals who were highly conscientious reacted to lower levels of variety in their jobs by engaging in organizational deviance. When highly conscientious employees perceived their jobs lacked variety, they were more likely to show deviance towards their organization. One explanation for this finding might be the achievement-oriented nature of highly conscientious individuals (Barrick and Mount, 2000). For such individuals their jobs are at the center of their lives and performing well on their jobs is a form of self-expression. Such individuals tend to be hardworking and ambitious. A job that lack variety may be perceived excessively monotonous and meaningless in the eyes of highly conscientious individuals causing them to feel frustration and disappointment. These negative feelings in turn may be leading to deviance. Another explanation could be from social exchange theory (Gould, 1979). Highly conscientious employees would exert a lot of effort, work harder, strive to achieve more difficult goals, and observe the rules. In return, they would expect to be treated with meaningful jobs that help them develop their skills and talents. When they perceive their jobs to be routine and monotonous, they might feel that they were given less than what they deserved by their organizations and may engage in organizational deviance to settle the score. In sum, although conscientiousness has direct negative impact on organizational deviance, it is not sufficient to hire employees with thigh conscientiousness. Managers should keep in mind that highly conscientious employees also expect jobs that provide high levels of variety. High conscientiousness combined with low levels of variety may trigger organizational deviance.

Finally, it was hypothesized that neuroticism would constrain the perceived job characteristics-organizational deviance relationship, such that individuals who have poor perceptions of their job characteristics are expected to respond through organizational deviance if they were high in neuroticism. This hypothesis was supported only for the identity-organizational deviance association. Thus, individuals who were high in neuroticism engaged in organizational deviance when they perceived that their jobs lacked identity. Highly neurotic individuals are prone to unpleasant emotions. This coupled with negative feelings associated with perceptions of doing something meaningless and trivial encouraged organizational deviance, as predicted. On the other hand, individuals low in neuroticism are high in emotional stability and they find more constructive ways to cope with unpleasant feelings arising from low identity.

The present study has several strengths. First, it proposed and tested comprehensive model that included job characteristics, personality, and their

interaction as antecedents of organizational deviance. Second, it recognized the importance of perceptions in assessment of work stressors. Third, it examined job design, which is an important element of work environment nonetheless neglected as a potential work stressor. Finally, it incorporated constructs that are conceptually-relevant and empirically supported which enabled a parsimonious model.

This study also has some limitations. First, it took into account job design as the only situational factor and neuroticism and conscientiousness as the only individual factors. Future studies should also include other aspects of the work environment (e.g., work overload, organizational climate) and personality characteristics beyond the big five (e.g., self-efficacy, locus of control). Also, the study design was cross-sectional. Therefore, causality cannot be assumed. Future studies should employ a longitudinal design to test the relationship between proposed variables. This study may be prone to common source bias, since all the data were collected with a single survey. Future studies may use different sources. For instance, coworkers or supervisors may rate employees' deviant behaviors.

## 6. Conclusion

Employee acts that intend to harm the organization are called organizational deviance. The present study shows that organizational deviance is a result of both individual differences in personality and situational differences in job design. Specifically, conscientiousness and neuroticism traits and job characteristics of identity and variety are especially important. Minimizing organizational deviance requires that jobs are designed to incorporate identity and variety and recruitment efforts screen individuals for conscientiousness and neuroticism traits. All in all, the present study contributes to a deeper and more integrated understanding of personal and situational predictors of organizational deviance

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## Özet

### Örgüte yönelik sapkın davranışları anlamada algılanan iş ve kişilik özelliklerinin doğrudan ve etkileşimli rolü

Bu araştırmanın amacı örgüte yönelik sapkın davranışları açıklayan, hem iş ortamının hem de çalışanın özelliklerini göz önüne alan bir model geliştirmek ve sınamaktır. Bu çalışmada iş ortamı iş tasarımı ve çalışan özellikleri ise kişilik olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Öne sürülen model, iş tasarımının ve kişilik özelliklerinin hem doğrudan hem de etkileşimli etkilerini dikkate almaktadır. Çalışmanın verileri kolayda örnekleme metodu ile Ankara’da kamu sektöründe çeşitli iş kollarında çalışmakta olan 662 kişiden toplanmıştır. Uygulanan regresyon analizleri sonucunda nevrotik ve sorumluluk kişilik özellikleri ile işin özelliklerinden görev kimliğinin örgüte yönelik sapkın davranışları anlamlı düzeyde yordadığı görülmüştür. Ayrıca, sorumluluk kişilik özelliğinin beceri çeşitliliğinin örgütsel sapkınlığa etkisi üzerinde düzenleyici rol oynadığı; nevrotik kişilik özelliğinin ise görev kimliğinin örgütsel sapkınlığa etkisi üzerinde düzenleyici rol oynadığı tespit edilmiştir. Çalışmanın bulgularının iş tasarımı ile personel seçimi ve işe alım süreçlerinin tasarlanması üzerine önemli olası sonuçları bulunmaktadır.

*Anahtar kelimeler:* Örgütsel sapkınlık, iş özellikleri, büyük beş kişilik özellikleri.