

**MODERATING ROLE OF WORK ENGAGEMENT
IN THE RELATIONSHIPS OF WORKPLACE
SPIRITUALITY, PERSONALITY-BASED
INTEGRITY, AND JOB SATISFACTION WITH
WORKPLACE DEVIANT BEHAVIOR AMONG
PUBLIC SERVANTS IN SABAH, MALAYSIA**



UMS

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**FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH**

2023

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I hereby declare that the material in this thesis is my own except for quotations, equations, summaries and references, which have been duly acknowledged.

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14 Mac 2023

ABSTRACT

Workplace deviant behavior exists when employees violate the organization's norms that intend to harm organizations and/or their members. Workplace deviant behavior is a serious issue that can jeopardize organizational goals if it is not encountered. The objectives of this study were 1) to identify which independent variables (workplace spirituality, personality-based integrity, and job satisfaction) are most important in predicting workplace deviant behavior; 2) to examine the moderating effect of work engagement on the relationship between workplace spirituality and workplace deviant behavior; 3) to examine the moderating effect of work engagement on the relationship between personality-based integrity and workplace deviant behavior; and 4) to examine the moderating effect of work engagement on the relationship between job satisfaction and workplace deviant behavior. The total participants in this study is 353 comprises of Malaysian public servants in Sabah through simple random and cluster sampling procedures using self-administered questionnaires via the drop and collect method. The data were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis. The results show that there were significant relationships between job satisfaction, personality-based integrity, and workplace spirituality with workplace deviant behavior. Further work engagement plays a moderating role in the relationship between workplace spirituality with workplace deviant behavior and job stress with workplace deviant behavior. However, work engagement does not moderate the relationships between personality-based integrity and workplace deviant behavior. The study also serves as evidence that job stress, personality-based integrity and workplace spirituality are related to workplace deviant behavior. Given this, employers may need to focus on work engagement as the mechanism to reduce workplace deviant behavior among employees by acting as a coping mechanism through strengthening their inner self. Work engagement plays its role to develop togetherness at the workplace in terms of the psychological aspect.

ABSTRAK

PERANAN PENGLIBATAN KERJA SEBAGAI PENYEDERHANA KE ATAS HUBUNGAN ANTARA SPIRITUAL TEMPAT KERJA, INTEGRITI BERASASKAN PERSONALITI DAN KEPUASAN KERJA DENGAN TINGKAH LAKU DEVIAN DI TEMPAT KERJA DALAM KALANGAN PENJAWAT AWAM DI SABAH, MALAYSIA

Tingkah laku menyimpang di tempat kerja wujud apabila pekerja melanggar norma organisasi yang bermaksud merosakkan organisasi dan / atau anggotanya. Tingkah laku menyimpang di tempat kerja adalah masalah serius yang boleh membahayakan matlamat organisasi jika tidak diatasi. Objektif kajian ini adalah 1) untuk mengenal pasti pemboleh ubah bebas (kerohanian di tempat kerja, integriti berdasarkan keperibadian, dan kepuasan kerja) yang paling menyumbang dalam meramalkan tingkah laku menyimpang di tempat kerja; 2) untuk mengkaji pengaruh penyederhana penglibatan kerja terhadap hubungan antara kerohanian tempat kerja dan tingkah laku menyimpang di tempat kerja; 3) untuk mengkaji kesan penglibatan kerja sebagai penyederhana terhadap hubungan antara integriti berasaskan keperibadian dan tingkah laku menyimpang di tempat kerja; dan 4) untuk mengkaji kesan penyederhanaan penglibatan kerja terhadap hubungan antara kepuasan kerja dan tingkah laku menyimpang di tempat kerja. Jumlah peserta kajian ini ialah 353 yang terdiri daripada penjawat awam Malaysia di Sabah melalui prosedur persampelan rawak mudah dan persampelan kluster dengan menggunakan soal selidik yang dikendalikan sendiri melalui kaedah 'tinggal dan kutip semula'. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis pemodelan persamaan struktur (Structural Equation Modeling). Hasilnya menunjukkan bahawa terdapat hubungan yang signifikan antara kepuasan kerja, integriti berdasarkan keperibadian, dan kerohanian tempat kerja dengan tingkah laku menyimpang di tempat kerja. Penglibatan kerja lebih jauh memainkan peranannya sebagai penyederhana dalam hubungan antara kerohanian tempat kerja dengan tingkah laku menyimpang di tempat kerja dan tekanan kerja dengan tingkah laku menyimpang di tempat kerja. Walau bagaimanapun, penglibatan kerja tidak menyederhanakan hubungan antara integriti berasaskan keperibadian dan tingkah laku menyimpang di tempat kerja. Kajian ini juga berfungsi sebagai bukti bahawa kepuasan kerja, integriti berdasarkan keperibadian dan penglibatan kerja mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan tingkah laku menyimpang di tempat kerja. Dengan ini, majikan mungkin perlu memfokuskan diri pada penglibatan kerja sebagai mekanisme untuk mengurangkan tingkah laku menyimpang di tempat kerja dengan bertindak sebagai mekanisme mengatasi masalah dengan memperkuat diri mereka. Penglibatan kerja memainkan peranannya untuk mengembangkan kebersamaan di tempat kerja dari aspek psikologi.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Despite the growing number of studies on work engagement, there is still lack of studies that have explored the relationships between work engagement, personality-based integrity, workplace spirituality, job satisfaction and workplace behaviors. The purpose of this study is to propose a model on the relationship between workplace spirituality, personality-based integrity, job satisfaction and workplace deviant behavior with work engagement as a moderator. Personality-based integrity, workplace spirituality, and job satisfaction are expected to correlate negatively with workplace deviant behavior. This chapter provides the background of the study on factors associated with workplace deviant behavior. The factors include workplace spirituality, personality-based integrity, job satisfaction, and moderating effect of work engagement. This chapter also presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions and objectives, the significance of the study, hypotheses of the study, scopes of study, and operational definition of terms used in this study.

1.2 Background of The Study

Deviant behavior at the workplace has become a serious problem in many countries such as India (Haldorai et al., 2020), China (Liu et al., 2020), Italy (Fida et al., 2015), Pakistan (Rubab, 2017), Indonesia (Eliyana & Sridadi, 2020), Malaysia (Abdul Rahim et al., 2014)

and United States (Christian & Ellis, 2014) and is common problem in workplace (Ahmad & Omar, 2014). Workplace deviant behavior is defined as any behaviors that go against the acceptable norms which harms the organizational (Sustiyatik, Setiono & Ridwan, 2019). It is also known as counterproductive behavior (Sackett & Devore, 2001; Singh, 2019) which refers to any kind of behavior that counter productivity in the workplace or in the organization itself (Widadi & Savitri, 2021). This is because both the workplace deviant behavior and counterproductive behavior hold the same concepts; behaviors that affect organizational negatively. Other than counterproductive behavior, workplace deviant behavior also were always nominate as insidious behavior (Greenberg, 2010), antisocial behavior (Giacalone & Greenberg, 1997), workplace aggression (Baron & Neuman, 1996), organizational misbehavior and noncompliant behavior (Puffer, 1987). Today, deviance is considered as one of the most serious problems faced by organizations worldwide. The diversity of deviance can lead to to dysfunction in the workplace that make this issue one of the crucial topics in organizational behavior. This is because behavior behavior is a costly behavior and negatively affects employees or organizational productivity and efficiency (Abbasi, Baradari, Sheghariji & Shahreki, 2020). In Australia, many cases are related to the occurrence of workplace deviant behavior such as hostility, antisocial where colleagues ignore each other and work in silo (work individually and not as a team), and even aggression (Mitchell, 2019). Besides, a similar situation can be found in Malaysia's public sector (Raman et al., 2016).

Corruption, which is classified as workplace deviant (Voliotis, 2017), is a serious concern all over the world (Joseph, Gunawan, Sawani, Rahmat, Noyem, & Darus, 2016). According to Voliotis (2017), corruption is anti-organizational rather than antisocial. However, corruption is not necessarily unethical, since the moral evaluation of an organizational act is, in principle, distinct from the determination of its deviance to organizational norms (Voliotis, 2017). This forms of workplace deviant behavior is getting pervasive throughout the countries regardless any races or nationality. It can be seen everywhere throughout social media and it can lead to norms if this issues are not addressed. Malaysia also experienced the same. As evidence, from 2012 to 2014, 688 reports from the Malaysian Anti- Corruption Commission (MACC) regarding bribery and corruption were taken involving government agencies (Sahril, 2015). The reports show that workplace deviant

behavior in the public sector exists. This is supported by the recommendations reports of a provision on civil servants' misconduct promptly enacted by the Operational Assessment Panel. The public sector is a large body that constitutes the government and its decentralized units. It includes police, public roads and transit authorities, military, schools, and healthcare systems. The public sector uses public funds and offers services based on inspiration to advance citizen's lives rather than to gain a profit. The public sector is worthy of research as it is the main contributor in terms of Malaysia's earnings towards state income and plays a dominant role in the success of a country.

Besides, a concrete evidence can be seen through decision of the Disciplinary Board for the Public Service Disciplining Board Meeting of the Support Group which convened on 25th of February 2021. The statistics of disciplinary cases among public servants of the Ministry of Education in February 2021 are as in the Table 1.1 below: (original source in Appendix A):

Table 1.1: The statistics of disciplinary cases among public servants

Disciplinary Case(s)	Number of case(s)
Absence	45
No attendance record	6
Substance abuse	2
Bankrupt	3
Fake leave certificates	1
Disciplinary violations	2
Financial procedures violation	4
Sexual abuse	2
Attempts to bring in outside influences	2
Surcharge case	1

*prepared by Integrity Unit, Ministry of Education Malaysia

Malaysia is a country with a multi-cultural society with the majority of Malays, Chinese and Indians. Culture is all the results and ideas learned and shared by members of a society. The ethnic diversity in Sabah and Sarawak has resulted in a variety of unique cultures in the states of Sabah and Sarawak. The composition of the population of

Sabah shows that too high compositional seen quite complex than in Malaysia which generally only focused on three main groups namely Malay, Chinese, and Indian. Even so, various analogies and statements have been issued by many politicians and the media by stating that the people of Sabah have a high attitude of openness or tolerance (Tamring & Mahali, 2020). The statement is evidenced by the situation of the community in Sabah which has never faced ethnic conflicts or raised issues that are the concern of the people due to ethnic differences. However, there are few deviant behavior such as taking excessive breaks, intentionally working slow than usual and scrolling social media during working hours were misunderstood as 'high tolerance behavior' at the workplace. This is probably because unawareness about the concept of workplace deviant behavior. The laid back and lenient culture among Sabahan public servants will affect organizational productivity and this led to the detrimental towards public servants' image and reputation.

Report from Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2016 shows the existence of corruption worldwide. The scores and rank of the countries determined by CPI indicate the level of corruption in a country's public sector. It also shows the bad functioning of public institutions. According to CPI, Malaysia ranks 62 out of 180 countries in 2021. In Corruption Perception Index, from the year 2014 to 2021, the CPI score for the Malaysian public sector has decreased from 52 to 48; CPI scores that closer to 0 indicates a high level of corruption, whereas CPI scores that closer to 100 indicates the country's public sector is very clean. Malaysia's ranking in Corruption Perception Index (CPI) for 2021 falls to number 62 compared to number 57 in 2020. According to Transparency International Malaysia (TI-M), across 180 countries, Malaysia's scored 48% compared to 51% in the previous year. The countries that fall in the highest rank in CPI are Denmark, New Zealand, Finland and Singapore. CPI in the year 2020 among Islamic countries, Malaysia falls in number 6 after United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Brunei, Oman, and Saudi Arabia. Among ASEAN countries, Malaysia placed 3rd after Singapore which placed 1st with an 85% score and placed 4th in the world ranking. Brunei placed second with a score of 60% which is the same in 2019 and remain at 35th place in the world ranking. The declination of Malaysian's CPI score shows the need for research to be conducted especially in the public sector due to the perception it shows that the inefficiency of

public services becomes increasingly serious concerning issues of corruption, which is part of workplace deviant behavior (Omar, Awang & Manaf, 2012).

The main concepts of workplace deviant behavior is any behaviors that go against the acceptable norms of the organization. Norms is referring to such acceptable principal's, behaviors and statements which are permitted within the organizations (Sustiyatik, Setiono & Ridwan, 2019). Workplace deviant behavior is different with unethical behavior. Workplace deviant behavior focusing on behavior that against the organizational standard whereas ethical behavior focusing on behavior that is right or wrong when judged in terms of justice, law, or other societal guidelines determining the morality of behavior. Even though some behaviors can be both deviance and unethical, yet the two behaviors are not inevitably linked. When employees violate the norms or in other words committing workplace deviance, it leads to complaints from either colleagues or clients. Employee deviance is defined as voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational standard and by doing so jeopardize the well-being of an organization, its members, or both. For example, the trend of deviant behavior can be seen through the number of complaints as it indicates that the performance of public servants is low, and in other words, productivity also declines due to the existence of workplace deviant behavior. These complaints can be seen through the Enforcement Agency Integrity Commission (EAIC) official website. The functions of EAIC are to receive complaints of public misconduct against law enforcement officials or enforcement agencies and investigate and hear the complaint; formulate and establish mechanisms for detecting, investigating and preventing misconduct by an enforcement officer; protect the public interest by preventing and addressing the misconduct of an enforcement officer; conducting audits and monitoring of specific aspects of the operations and procedures of an enforcement agency; promote awareness, improvement and education on integrity within an enforcement agency and reduce misconduct among enforcement officers; assisting the Government in formulating legislation, or recommending administrative measures to the Government or an enforcement agency, in order to promote integrity and eliminate abuses among law enforcement officers; to review and validate any violations of enforcement procedures and to make any recommendations necessary in connection therewith; and make a visit to the premises of an enforcement agency, including visit the police

station and lockout under any written law, and make any necessary recommendations (EAIC Official Website).

According to EAIC, the number of statistics regarding the misbehaves of public servants through complaints made by citizens increased from the year 2013 until 2019. Whereas the total number of complaints from 2011 until to date is 4,568. Most of the complaints were made through an official letter as the channel from the public to the complaint. This huge number of complaints shows that the performance of Malaysian public servants is at a low level.

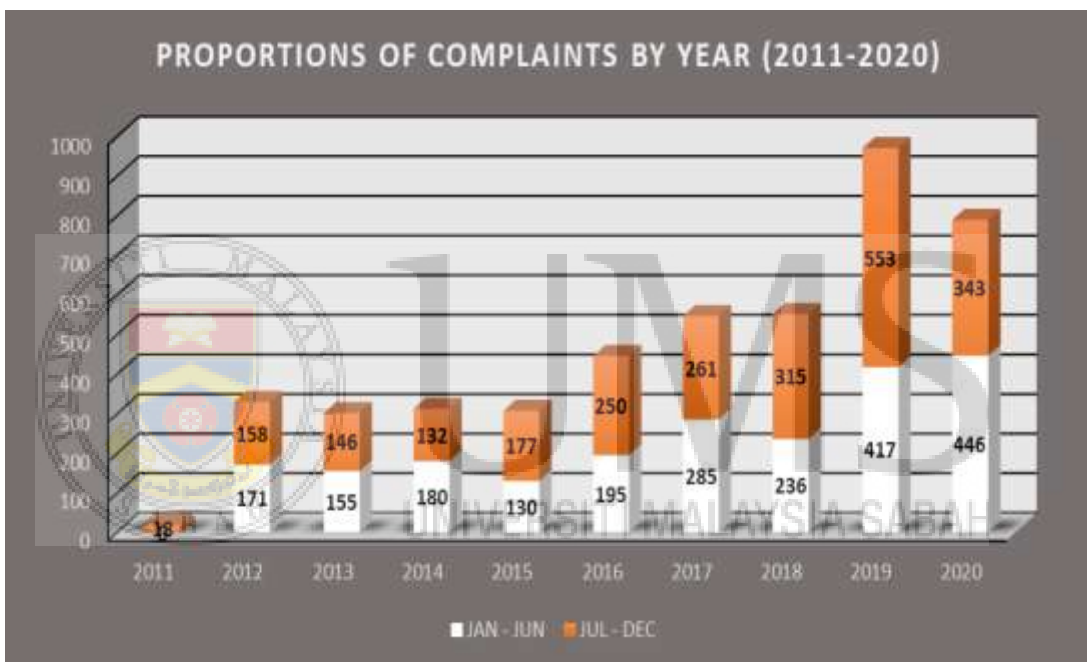
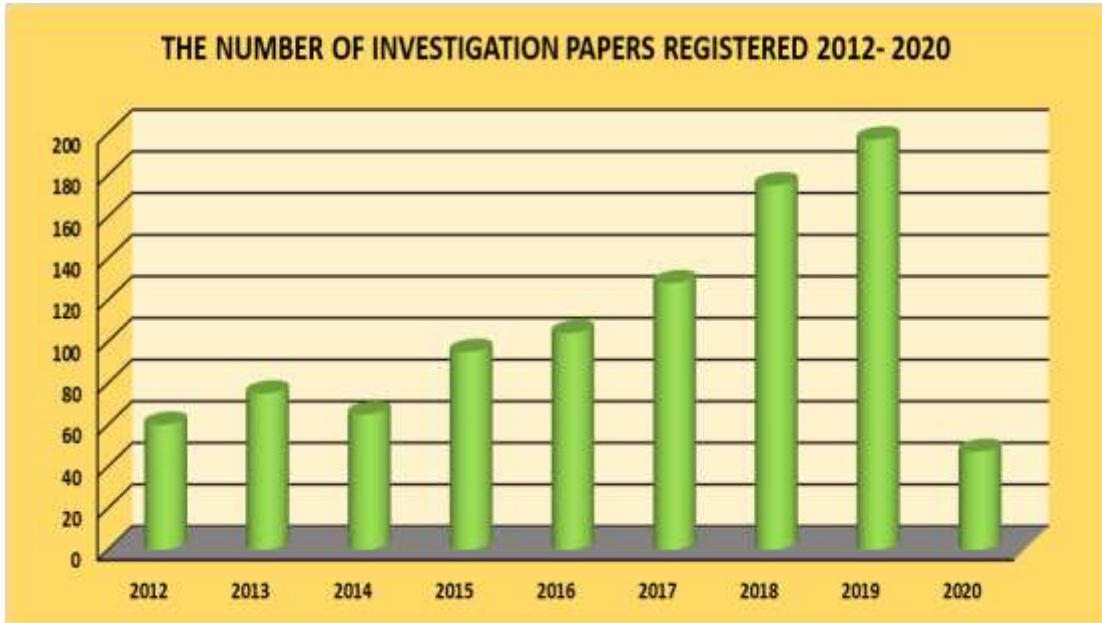


Figure 1.1 : Proportions of Complaints by Medium (2011-2020)

Source : <http://www.eaic.gov.my/pusat-sumber/statistik/statistik-aduan>

Also, EAIC revealed the statistic of public servants under investigation increased from the year 2014 to 2016. The total number of investigations is 946 from the year 2012 until to date.



Figures 1.2 : The number of investigation papers registered

Source : <http://www.eaic.gov.my/pusat-sumber/statistik/statistik-siasatan>

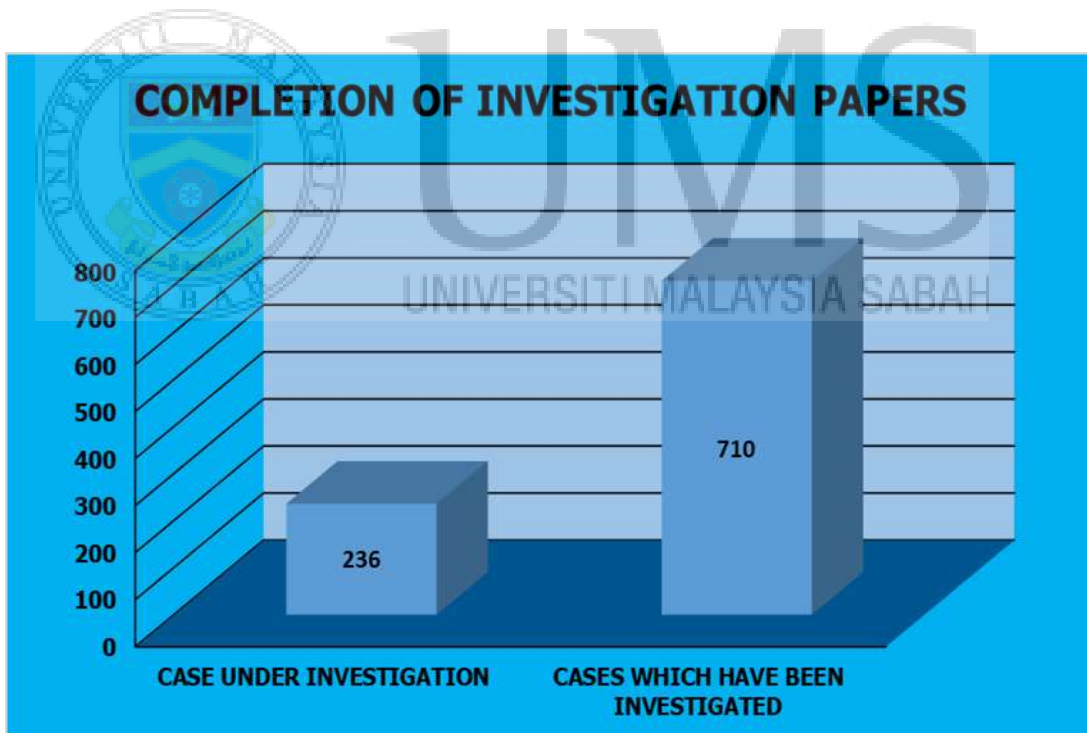


Figure 1.3 : Completion of investigation papers

Source : <http://www.eaic.gov.my/pusat-sumber/statistik/statistik-siasatan>

Despite the issue is getting worst, the Malaysian government has taken several initiatives to overcome workplace deviance. One of the significant steps taken by the Malaysian government is the establishment of the National Integrity Plan. The

National Integrity Plan is enacted and launched with the specific objective of raising awareness, commitment, and collaboration from various sectors and societal to cultivate integrity. This agenda created by the Malaysian government aims to make integrity a cultural community, strengthen the moral foundations of society and the state, in addition, to improve the welfare of citizens, increasing the competitiveness and resilience in addressing the challenges of globalization. The formulation of the National Integrity Plan initiatives and the establishment of the Malaysian Integrity Institute on April 23, 2004, in Putrajaya shows the commitment of the fifth former Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. This important agenda embraces the principles and philosophies of the Federal Constitution and the Rukun Negara, as well as bringing humanity, human capital, and individual identity as the driving force of sustainable development.

Recognizing the need and necessity to preserve integrity agenda, setting the steps to overcome challenges, and obstacles should be taken. The Key Performance Indicator is used for determining the success of the effort to cultivate integrity in the Malaysian society as the Key Result Area. A combination of two ways to evaluate the effectiveness of implementing strategies and integrity agenda programs as outlined in the National Integrity Plan will continue to be implemented. First, it is based on the views of stakeholders from various sectors of society and countries. Second, through quantitative approaches that make judgments based on achievements that are statistically measurable and given a specific index. The improvements in components and bench marking are made based on stakeholder feedback.

The Malaysian government is very committed to combating corruption. The establishment of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) and five relevant advisory panels, the establishment of a special court dealing with corruption cases, as well as other enhancement mechanisms, clearly demonstrates the seriousness of the country's leadership. The seriousness of the Malaysian government can be seen through the establishment of MACC in replacing to Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA). The membership of the organization and the MACC Act is improved to strengthen the prevention and enforcement aspects. It has been emphasized in the 2009 MACC Act which is to promote integrity and accountability of the private and public sectors and

also to educate public authorities and citizens regarding corruption and its adverse effects on the whole society.

Besides, the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Sabah received a total of 85 complaints involving misconduct by civil servants in the year of 2017 to 2019 (Sabah Post, 2020). Also, Bernama (2016) also reports that 22 public servants including a woman in Sabah have been investigated by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission over a fraudulent claim. Most recently, one of the thirteen arrested in "Op Cegah" by the National Anti-Drug Agency in Keningau was a public servant. They were all positive in a drug test. This phenomenon gives negative impacts on both the public sector and society. Due to the arousal issues of workplace deviant behavior in Sabah, hence this study is conducted among Malaysian public servants in Sabah. However, to curb this misconduct behavior among public servants especially Sabahan, the Sabah State Government has introduced "Sabah Maju Jaya" concept as the name of the Sabah Development Plan for the year 2021-2025; to bring the image of inclusivity, shared ownership and responsibility of every Sabahan to succeed in the state's development agenda. The direction of Sabah Maju Jaya (SMJ) functions as a guide to the direction of the government's policies and programmes, further guiding the implementation in a planned and strategic manner, to achieve targets and goals that coincide with the development needs of the state. S-M-J has its meaning of objectives to be gained from Sabah Maju Jaya concept. S is referring to agriculture, industry, and tourism sectors; M is referring to human capital and people's well-being; while J is referring to infrastructure network and green sustainability. In Malaysia, workplace misconduct is typically regulated through various laws and regulations, such as the Employment Act 1995, Industrial Relations Act 1967, and the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994. These laws provide guidelines and procedures for dealing with workplace issues, including misconduct, harassment and discrimination. The Ministry of Human Resources is responsible for overseeing labor related matters in Malaysia, including promoting fair employment practices, ensuring occupational safety and health, and handling labor disputes. The Ministry, along with its departments and agencies, may initiate awareness campaigns, provide training programs, and enforce compliance with labor laws to address workplace misconduct. Additionally, organizations in Malaysia may have their own policies and procedures in place to prevent and address workplace deviant

behavior. These can include internal grievance mechanisms, disciplinary procedures, and codes of conduct that employees are expected to adhere to. It is aligned with the concept of Malaysia Madani, which translates to "Civilized Malaysia", may encompass broader objectives related to promoting good governance, ethics, and civic values in various aspects of society.

However, over the past few years, issues of deviant behavior at the workplace among Malaysia's public servants are getting pervasive (Alias, Rasdi, Ismail & Samah, 2013). Various problems in the workplace triggered by workers' dissatisfaction as well as lack of moral values such as integrity; have increased the rate of workplace deviant behavior (Omar, Halim, Zainah, Farhadi, Nasir & Kahirudin, 2011; Abbas et al., 2014). Organizations today need to emphasize the welfare and well-being of workers to avoid deviant behavior in the workplace. This is because workplace deviant behavior adversely affecting the organization itself such as decrease organizational losses and productivity (Ahmad & Omar, 2013), jeopardize organizational goal, lead to poor service reputation, creates a hostile working environment, and influence both the overall organizational and individual performance negatively (Van den Broeck, Sulea, Vander Elst, Fischmann, Illiescu, & De Witte, 2014).

1.3 Statement Of The Problem

Rising one's strengths and qualities in the major realm of living; which is work—becomes an important task to bring happiness. When employees feel happy at their work, the possibility to act deviant at their workplace is reduced as they have positive feelings and getting engaged in their responsibilities during work. Work engagement with its constructive outcomes both in and outside work appears to be among this preferred tasks (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007). Work engagement consists of the application of high amounts of energy to, and strong identification with, an individual's work (Bakker et al., 2014). Engaging employees is critical for retaining valuable talent and is an important piece of the employee satisfaction; as disengaged employees are more likely to leave their jobs. Such engagement is a work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli &