



Employee perspectives on safety citizenship behaviors and safety violations



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ABSTRACT

Two studies investigate whether employees viewing discretionary safety activities as part of their job role (termed safety citizenship role definitions, SCRDS) plays an important part in predicting two types of safety violation: routine violations conceptualized as related to an individual's available cognitive energy or 'effort'; and situational violations, which are those provoked by the organization (Reason, 1990). Study 1 showed SCRDS predicted situational violations only, and partially mediated the relationships between Perceived Management Commitment to Safety (PMCS) and work engagement with situational violations. These findings add to those by Hansez and Chmiel (2010), showing that routine and situational violations have predictors that differ. Study 1 findings also extend research reported by Turner et al. (2005), by showing that the effect of Job Control on SCRDS was mediated by both PMCS and work engagement. In study 2, participation in discretionary safety activities (safety participation) mediated the relationship between SCRDS and situational violations. Similar to study 1 The link between SCRDS and routine violations was non-significant and, strikingly, so was the link between safety participation and routine violations. These results support the view that processes involving SCRDS and safety participation are not cognitive-energetical in nature. In addition, study 2 findings extend previous work by Neal and Griffin (2006) by showing that SCRDS and safety knowledge partially mediated relationships between safety motivation and safety participation, whereas the direct effect of safety motivation on safety participation was non-significant. The results from both studies support the view that SCRDS are important in predicting situational violations.

In study 2 SCRDS were shown to partially mediate the relationship between safety motivation and self-reported participation in discretionary safety activities (Safety Participation) which, in turn, related to situational violations. Interestingly there was no significant direct link between SCRDS and situational violations. These findings support the view that the effect of SCRDS on situational violations is fully mediated by participation in discretionary safety activities.

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1. Introduction

Neal and Griffin (2006) found that employees reporting they took part in discretionary safety activities (safety participation), such as promoting safety initiatives and volunteering for safety committees, predicted later compliance with mandatory safety rules and regulations. Taking part in discretionary safety activities has been linked to the perspective employees take on such partic-

ipatory activities. If they consider them as more part of their job, they are more likely to carry them out (Hofmann et al., 2003). Therefore, how employees regard discretionary safety activities in relation to their job (Safety Citizenship Role Definitions, SCRDS) is potentially important to predict their compliance with, or violation of, mandatory safety rules and regulations.

In this paper, we have two main aims: one is to investigate the role of SCRDS in mediating the relationships between important workplace and employee variables, and violations; and the other is to test the proposition that safety participation is involved in the relationship between SCRDS and violations.

The general model of safety performance advanced by Christian et al. (2009) identifies that both distal and proximal factors are antecedents of safety participation and safety violations. Situa-

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tional distal factors refer to aspects of employees' working situations, such as those involved in their jobs, whereas proximal factors are safety-related motivation, knowledge and skills possessed by employees.

In light of past research by Turner et al. (2005) showing that job control predicts SCRDS, we develop our hypotheses using job control as a primary distal variable of interest in study 1. Christian et al. (2009) showed safety motivation to be the key proximal variable involved in the prediction of safety participation and safety compliance. Therefore we develop our hypotheses using safety motivation as a primary variable of interest in study 2.

2. Study 1

Previous research by Turner et al. (2005) showed job control predicted SCRDS: greater control predicted employees reporting discretionary safety activities were more part of their job. Hansez and Chmiel (2010) showed work engagement and perceived management commitment to safety (PMCS) mediated the relationship between job resources and routine and situational violations. Job control is an important job resource related to safety outcomes (Nahrgang et al., 2011). Therefore, in study 1 we investigate whether work engagement and PMCS mediate the relationship between job control and SCRDS in predicting violations.

2.1. Safety citizenship role definitions and safety violations

Based on Neal and Griffin (2006) and Hofmann et al. (2003) we expect SCRDS to relate to violations since, as noted above, SCRDS are associated with involvement in safety citizenship behaviors (safety participation) which predict compliance with mandatory rules and regulations.

In contrast to previous research that treats compliance with, or violation of, mandatory rules and regulations as one category of safety behaviors, we distinguish between routine and situational violations in this paper. Routine violations are conceptualized as related to an individual's available cognitive energy or 'effort', and situational violations are those provoked by the organization (Reason, 1990). Using the Job Demands Resources (JDR) model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007), Hansez and Chmiel (2010) showed that routine and situational violations were separable types of violation, and had predictors that differ. As expected, they found that job strain, a variable indicating depletion of cognitive energy, mediated the relationship between job demands and routine, but not situational, violations. Thus, we include both types of violation in this paper to enable us to investigate more fully the potential processes associated with SCRDS in predicting violations.

An important question then, is whether SCRDS should predict both routine and situational violations? Routine violations are conceptualized as effort related, and so are associated with depletion of cognitive energy. On the other hand, perspective taking appears mostly associated with social-psychological processes. It is difficult, therefore, to see why the perspective employees take on discretionary safety activities, or their consequent participation in such activities, should predict routine violations (the relationship between safety participation and routine violations is tested specifically in study 2). Indeed, Turner et al. (2012) showed that job demands, conceptualized as energy depleting in the JDR model, *did not* predict safety participation. Nonetheless previous research is somewhat ambiguous, since Turner et al. (2005) showed that job demands *did* predict SCRDS. It is plausible to suggest, however, that the association between job demands and SCRDS found by Turner et al. (2005) reflected that employees with higher job demands were less receptive to considering non-mandatory safety activities as part of their job, without implying that the perspective they took

predicts effort-based routine violations. So, we propose that SCRDS will predict situational violations only, and test that proposition in study 1.

H1. SCRDS will relate to situational violations only.

As a consequence of H1, when we produce our hypotheses below about the role of SCRDS in the relationships between job control, work engagement, PMCS and violations, we expect SCRDS to be involved in predicting situational violations only.

2.2. Job control, work engagement and violations

From the perspective of the Job Demands Resources model (JDR), job resources play both an intrinsic and extrinsic motivational role reflected in work engagement. Work engagement is conceptualized as a motivational state characterised by vigor, absorption, and dedication. Job resources foster employees' growth, learning, and development on the one hand, and the willingness to invest one's efforts and abilities to the work task on the other, thereby achieving work goals (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007).

Hansez and Chmiel (2010) argued, with respect to safety, that work engagement is associated with the development of new ways to cope with cumbersome organizational safety practices, and with investing extra effort in meeting safety goals. For example, on the one hand, employees could arrange for personal protective equipment to be more easily accessible, so reducing situational violations. On the other hand, engaged employees could be more willing to compensate for depletion of cognitive energy, so reducing routine violations. Their results supported this view.

In relation to job control in particular, Parker et al. (2001) and Turner et al. (2012) found that job control was positively related to safety compliance (i.e. not violating rules and regulations). We argue, therefore, that having greater autonomy over when and how to carry out one's job will allow engaged employees the opportunity to manage and change more readily organizational practices that provoke violations, so reducing situational violations. Consistent with this view, Snyder et al. (2008) showed that perceptions of safety-related situational constraints, such as 'incorrect instructions' and 'improper work layout', predicted workplace injury severity, but this effect was buffered by higher control over safety, such as being able to modify work conditions to make them safer.

In addition, higher job control implies that engaged employees are also likely to be more efficient with when and how they use their cognitive resources, and so, willing and able to invest more effort in meeting safety goals, such as reducing routine violations.

Therefore, we expect higher job control to be associated with both lower situational and routine violations, and for work engagement to mediate those relationships.

H2. Work Engagement will mediate the relationship between Job Control and both Routine and Situational Safety Violations.

2.3. Job control, perceived management commitment to safety, and violations

Neal et al. (2000) proposed that general organizational climate provides a context in which specific evaluations of the value given to safety are made. For example, they argued if employees perceive that there is open communication in the organization, then they may also perceive that communication about safety is valued in the organization. Similarly, if employees perceive that the organization is supportive of their general welfare and well-being, they will be more likely to perceive that the organization values the

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