

---

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EFFECT OF DEMOGRAPHIC  
VARIABLES ON WORKERS ATTITUDE TOWARDS WORKPLACE  
STEALING BEHAVIOUR**

Rosemary Serwah Boateng\*

Safura Mohammed\*\*

Rebecca Tetteh\*\*\*

---

**ABSTRACT**

*The current paper contribute to the body of knowledge in Counter Productive Work Behaviour (CPWB) by examining the link between demographic variables and workers attitude towards workplace stealing, the cause of workplace stealing and workers behaviour in relation to workplace theft. The research is based on descriptive, quantitative, cross-sectional survey using a sample of 174 workers of small and medium scale Enterprises in Sunyani Township. Sample selection is based on convenient sampling method. Primary data was collected using self-designed questionnaire, administered by the researchers and research assistants. Data was analysed using cross-tabulation and Pearson Chi-square. The findings support the assumption that demographic variables influence workers attitude towards workplace stealing, workers understanding of the causes of workplace theft and their behaviour in relation to work place stealing. Management of organisations should incorporate the findings into their policies to deal with CPWB. Causal studies using structural modeling should be considered in future studies.*

**Key Words:** Demographic variables; Employee theft; Economic pressure; internal control system; Low salary

---

\*Department of Agriculture, Sunyani Polytechnic, Sunyani, Ghana

\*\*Department of Building Technology, Sunyani Polytechnic, Sunyani, Ghana

\*\*\*Department of Marketing Sunyani Polytechnic, Sunyani, Ghana

---

## INTRODUCTION

The issue of employee stealing behaviour has attracted the attention of researchers in various fields such as economics; human resources; sociology; management; psychology (Yeboah et al., 2012; Bamfield, 2004; Weber, Kurke & Pentico, 2003). As reported in the literature (Moorthy et al., 2009; Mishra & Prasad, 2006; Garber & Walkup, 2004 ) organisations loss (example stock replacement costs; opportunity cost of missed sales; poor culture for productivity; decreased employee morale; time and diversion of resources from business activities; stock replacement costs) as a results of stealing behaviour of workers.

Researchers (Yeboah et al., 2012; Moorthy et al., 2009; Korolishin, 2003; Simon & Houghton, 2003; Greenberg, 2002; Walsh, 2000; Robinson & O’Leary-Kelly, 1998; Trevino et al. 1993) have reported in the literature of various reasons (less or no punishment; to cover expenses; dissatisfied job conditions; unequal pay or salary) and factors (large orgainsations; little or no stake in the organisation and misplaced trust; weak internal control systems; no or weak supervision and absence of punishment for workers who steal and are caught; low pay jobs; low status jobs; witnessing co-worker stealing behaviour) that influence stealing behaviour of workers

Demographic variables have been reported in the literature to influence stealing behaviour of workers (Yeboah et al., 2012; Appelbaum et al., 2007; Valentine & Rittenberg, 2007; Appelbaum et al., 2006; Fleet & Griffin, 2006; O’Fallon & Butterfield, 2005; Loo, 2003; Peterson, 2002; Robinson & Greenberg, 1998; Greenberg & Barling, 1996; Robinson & Benett, 1995; Baumol, 1990; Hollinger & Clark, 1983; Murphy, 1993). Demographic variables identified in the literature are gender; age; education; position of employee in an organisation; history of stealing; years of employment; status of employment (part-time/full-time); marital status of employees and personality type. Workers who are older are reported to behave ethically than younger employees. Females are reported to engage in ethical behaviours than males. Newly employed workers behave unethically than workers who have stayed longer in an organisation. Employees with many years of education behave ethically than workers with less education. Permanent workers engage in ethical behaviour than casual workers.

## STATEMENT OF PROBLEM/JUSTIFICATION/SIGNIFICANCE

The losses of organisations as results of employee's stealing behaviour have been reported in the literature (Yeboah et al., 2012). It is estimated that firms loose an amount between "\$40 to \$400 billion". In addition some organisations also collapse within the first five years of establishment. These calls for empirical examination of the variables that influence workers to steal from the organisations in which they work and earn their living. The current paper examines employee stealing behaviour in Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in relation to the role of demographics in employee stealing behaviour. To the knowledge of the researchers less empirical studies exists in the study area on the current topic of discussion. The findings of the current study fill in the literature gap. The findings serve as reference material for empirical research in future studies. The findings provide further understanding on the theories of employee stealing behaviour by providing answers to the research questions answered in the current study. The findings will also provide policy guide to managers of SMEs. The researchers believe the analysis will help management to reduce worker stealing behaviour.

### **GENERAL OBJECTIVES/SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

The current paper contributes to knowledge in the area of workers stealing behaviour by investigating the link between demographic variables and workers stealing behaviour. The paper specifically

- ❖ Examine demographic variables and their effect on stealing behaviour.

### **Research Questions/ Hypotheses**

The study provides answer to the following research question;

- ❖ What demographic variable(s) influence workers stealing behaviour?

The study is based on an assumption that demographic variables influence workers stealing behaviour.

### **LIMITATIONS/SCOPE**

The study is based on primary data obtained from respondents who are workers. Issues such as respondent's bias might affect the reliability of the results. For fear of punishment, some respondents were not willing to answer the questions. The findings might suffer from external validity since respondents were selected through convenient sampling method. The study does not focus on other counter productive work behaviours such as gossiping, but only stealing behaviour of workers.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based on quantitative, descriptive cross-sectional survey, using a sample of 172 workers of SMEs who were selected through the use of convenience sampling method. Primary data was collected from the respondents at their work place using self designed questionnaire by the researchers and research assistants. Primary data was analysed using cross-tabulation and correlation and presented in tables.

## DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

### Demographic features of respondents

The survey comprises 49.4% males and 48.8% females. Majority (61%) belong to the age group of 20-30years, followed by 23.3% in the age group of 31-40years, then 9.9% in the age group of 41-50years with 2.9% above 51years and 2.9% missing responses.

Majority (58.7%) of them were single with 37.2% been married and 4.1% missing responses. On educational level, majority (27.3%) have attained Higher National Diploma (HND) followed by Senior High School (SHS) (20.9%); Degree holders (19.2%); Ordinary Diploma (16.3%); Junior High School (JHS) (9.9%); Master's degree (5.2%) and 1.2% missing responses.

Respondents have worked for various numbers of years. Most (55.8%) respondents have been in employment less than 5years followed by 5-10years (24.4%) then those who have worked more than 20years (6.4%); between 11-15years (5.8%) and those who have worked between 16-20years (2.9%) with (4.7%) missing responses.

On scheme of work, most respondents (37.8%) are administrative workers followed by casual workers (34.3%); 12.8% technicians; 8.1% waiters and 6.4% waitresses with 0.6% missing responses. The personality types of respondents are in two groups which are Type A (47.1%) and Type B (24.4%). Some respondents (26.2%) do not know their personality type with 2.3% missing responses.

**Table 1. Distribution of responses on demographic features**

Variables	Frequency	Percentages
<b>GENDER</b>		
Male	85	49.4
Female	84	48.8

**IMPACT FACTOR – 3.783**

Missing responses	3	1.7
Total	172	100.0
<b>AGE</b>		
20-30years	105	61.0
31-40years	40	23.3
41-50years	17	9.9
51 and above	5	2.9
Missing responses	5	2.9
Total	172	100.0
<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>		
Single	101	58.7
Married	64	37.2
Missing responses	7	4.1
Total	172	100.0
<b>EDUCATIONAL LEVEL</b>		
JHS	17	9.9
SHS	36	20.9
Diploma	28	16.3
HND	47	27.3
Degree	33	19.2
Masters	9	5.2
Missing responses	2	1.2
TOTAL	172	100.0
<b>TENURE OF WORK</b>		
Less than 5years	96	55.8
5-10years	42	24.4

11-15years	10	5.8
16-20years	5	2.9
More than 20years	11	6.4
Missing responses	8	4.7
Total	172	100.0
<b>SCHEME OF WORK</b>		
Administration	65	37.8
Casual	59	34.3
Technician	22	12.8
Waiter	14	8.1
Waitress	11	6.4
Missing responses	1	0.6
Total	172	100.0
<b>PERSONALITY</b>		
Type A	81	47.1
Type B	42	24.4
I don't know	45	26.2
Missing responses	4	2.3
Total	172	100.0

(Source: Author's field survey, 2012)

## CORRELATION ANALYSIS

The association between socio-demographics and respondents stealing behaviour as well as the reasons workers steal at work places was tested using Pearson chi-square test. The results are reported in this section of the paper.

### Gender effect in workers stealing behaviour

Gender shows significant correlation with two questions on stealing which are 'have you ever stolen from your job' (chi-square=7.530; p=0.023) and 'whether young employees are prone to theft' (chi-square=8.209; p=0.084).

### AGE EFFECT IN WORKERS STEALING BEHAVIOUR

---

There is significant association between age and questions such as ‘whether workers will steal if given a chance’ (chi-square=23.393;  $p=0.025$ ); ‘workplace thieves are generally unmarried employees’ (chi-square=26.818;  $p=0.008$ ); ‘workers should steal when they are paid less’ (chi-square=18.604;  $p=0.099$ ).

#### **Scheme of work**

There is statistical significant link between scheme of work questions such as ‘have you ever stolen from your job’ (chi-square=14.783;  $p=0.064$ ); ‘have you seen a worker who has stolen before’ (chi-square=15.167;  $p=0.056$ ); ‘will you report co-worker stealing behaviour to management’ (chi-square=15.546;  $p=0.049$ ) and ‘workplace thieves are generally new’ (chi-square=25.898;  $p=0.055$ ).

#### **Educational level**

There is statistical significant relation between educational level and questions such as ‘will you report co-worker stealing behaviour if your salary will be increased’ (chi-square=23.149;  $p=0.081$ ); ‘some employees steal for status/to cover extra expenses’ (chi-square=35.289;  $p=0.019$ ) and ‘feelings of mistreatment by the employer influence workers to steal (chi-square=30.204;  $p=0.067$ )’.

#### **Tenure of work**

There is statistical significant correlation between tenure of work and questions such as ‘will you report co-worker stealing behaviour if your salary will be increased’ (chi-square=23.757;  $p=0.022$ ); ‘young employees are prone to theft’ (chi-square=27.405;  $p=0.037$ ); ‘educated people steal than less educated people’ (chi-square=25.417;  $p=0.063$ ); ‘poor internal control systems often provide employees with the opportunity’ (chi-square=29.903;  $p=0.019$ ); ‘feelings of mistreatment by the employer influence workers to steal’ (chi-square=27;  $p=0.038$ ) and ‘workers should steal when they are paid less’ (chi-square=27.038;  $p=0.041$ ).

#### **Personality**

Statistical significant correlation exists between personality type and questions such as ‘poor internal control systems often provide employees with the opportunity’ (chi-square=13.752;  $p=0.088$ ); ‘most workers will steal if given a chance’ (chi-square=17.785;  $p=0.023$ ); ‘workplace thieves are generally new’ (chi-square=15.304;  $p=0.053$ ) and ‘workers who steal from work feel guilty of their behaviour’ (chi-square=27.171;  $p=0.001$ ).

#### **Marital status**

Statistical significant correlation exists between marital status and question such as ‘most workers will steal if given a chance’ (chi-square=25.491; p=0.013).

### **CROSS-TABULATION ANALYSIS**

Cross-tabulation was used to provide the descriptive statistics on respondent’s attitude towards workplace stealing behaviour and reasons for stealing at work places and socio-demographic variables.

#### **Gender effect in workers stealing behaviour**

More female respondents (80.5%) than male (70.2%) respondents have never stolen from their job. More male respondents (54.2%) than female (51.2%) respondents strongly disagree/disagree that young employees are prone to theft.

#### **Age effect in workers stealing behaviour**

Significant majority (80.0%) of the respondents in the age group above 51years strongly agree/agree that ‘most workers will steal if given a chance’ than those in the age groups of 41-50years (64.7%); 31-40years (57.5%) and 20-30years (50.2%). Significant majority (80.0%) of the respondents in the age group above 51years strongly disagree/disagree that ‘workplace thieves are generally unmarried employees’ than those in the age groups of 41-50years (53%); 31-40years (55%) and 20-30years (79.4%). Majority (61.9%) of the respondents in the age group above between 20-30years strongly disagree/disagree that ‘workers should steal when they are paid less’ than those in the age groups of 41-50years (53%); 31-40years (51.3%) and above 51years (50%).

#### **Scheme of work**

Majority (69.2%) of the respondents in administration have never seen a worker who has stolen before’ than casual worker (63.8%); technician (59.1%); waiter (35.7%) and waitress (27.3%). Majority (69.2%) of the respondents in administration will report co-worker steal behaviour to management’ than casual worker (45.8%); technician (40.9%); waiter (21.4%) and waitress (54.5%). Majority (79%) of the respondents who are casual workers strongly disagree/disagree that workplace thieves are generally new’ than administrative workers (66.2%); technician (52.4%); waiter (28.5%) and waitress (40.0%). Majority (85.7%) of the respondents in administration have never stolen from their workplace than casual worker (74.1%); technician (68.2%); waiter (42.9%) and waitress (81.8%).

#### **Educational level**

---



Majority (52.9%) of the respondents with JHS level of education will not report co-worker stealing behaviour if their salary will be increased than those with SHS (52.8%); Diploma (46.4%); HND (51.1%); Degree (33.3%) and Masters (44.4%). Majority (77.8%) of the respondents with Masters level of education strongly agree/agree that some employees steal for status or to cover external expenses than those with SHS (65.7%); Diploma (60.7%); HND (68.1%); Degree (66.7%) and JHS (58.9%). Majority (71.4%) of the respondents with SHS level of education strongly agree/agree that 'feelings of mistreatment by the employer influence workers to steal than those with JHS (64.7%); Diploma (32.1%); HND (53.2%); Degree (51.5%) and Masters (22.2%).

### **Tenure of work**

Majority (60%) of the respondents with 16-20years of work experience 'will not report co-worker stealing behaviour if their salary will be increased' than respondents with less than 5years (50%); 5-10years (53.7%); 11-15years (50%) and those with more than 20years (54.5%). Majority (70%) of the respondents with more than 20years of work experience strongly disagree/disagree that young employees are prone to theft than respondents with less than 5years (61.7%); 5-10years (41.4%); 11-15years (10%) and those with 16-20years (40%). Majority (72.7%) of the respondents with more than 20years of work experience strongly agree/agree that educated people steal than less educated people than respondents with less than 5years (51%); 5-10years (31%); 11-15years (20%) and those with 16-20years (40%).

Majority (73.9%) of the respondents with 16-20years of work experience strongly agree/agree that poor internal control systems often provide employees with the opportunity to steal than those with less than 5years (59.5%); 5-10years (40%); 11-15years (60%) and those with more than 20years (54.6%). Majority (80%) of the respondents with 16-20years of work experience strongly agree/agree that feelings of mistreatment by the employer influence workers to steal than those with less than 5years (57.9%); 5-10years (45.3%); 11-15years (50%) and those with more than 20years (27.3%). Majority (72.8%) of the respondents with more than 20years of work experience strongly disagree/disagree that workers should steal when they are paid less than respondents with less than 5years (57.3%); 5-10years (56.1%); 11-15years (30%) and those with 16-20years (60%).

### **Personality**

Majority (75.3%) of the respondents with Type A personality strongly agree/agree that poor internal control systems often provide employees with the opportunity to steal than Type B personality (57.1%) and those who did not know their personality type (62.2%). Majority (71.5%) of the respondents with Type B personality strongly agree/agree that most workers will steal if given a chance than Type A personality (70.3%) and those who did not know their personality type (52.3%). Majority (67.5%) of the respondents with Type B personality strongly agree/agree that workplace thieves are generally new than Type A personality (66.3%) and those who did not know their personality type (59.1%). Majority (53%) of the respondents with Type A personality strongly disagree/disagree that workers who steal from work feel guilty of their behaviour than Type B personality (41.4%) and those who did not know their personality type (24.5%).

#### **Marital status**

Majority (68.7%) of the respondents who are married strongly agree/agree that most workers will steal if given a chance than unmarried respondents (65%). Marital status influence only one response.

#### **DISCUSSIONS**

The findings are as expected per the assumption underlying the paper. The findings are in support of previous studies (Yeboah et al., 2012; Peterson, 2002; Greenberg, 1998; Baumol, 1990; Hollinger & Clark, 1983; Murphy, 1993) that reported that demographic variables influence workers stealing behaviour; attitude towards workplace behaviour and the knowledge level of workers on the causes of workplace theft. Older employees (age) generally behave ethically than younger employed workers (Appelbaum et al., 2007; Appelbaum et al., 2006; O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005; Greenberg & Barling, 1996). In the current study, females steal less than males as reported in previous studies. Females generally behave in more ethical manner than their males (Valentine & Rittenberg, 2007; Appelbaum et al. 2005; O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005; Loo, 2003). Employees with many years of experience behave more ethically than newly employed workers. Workers with more education are also reported to behave more ethically than workers with less years of education (Appelbaum et al., 2006). Personality Type A are reported to be more prone to unethical behaviour than Type B personality (Fleet & Griffin, 2006; Robinson & Greenberg, 1998; Robinson & Benett, 1995). Permanent (Tenure) worker behave more

---

ethically than casual workers (Appelbaum et al., 2007; Appelbaum, et al., 2005; Robinson & Greenberg, 1998; Greenberg & Barling, 1996).

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objectives of the paper have been achieved. Demographic variables (gender; age; marital status; educational level; tenure of work; scheme of work and personality) influence workers attitude towards workplace stealing behaviour; workers understanding of the causes of workplace theft. Organisational policies to deal with workplace theft should incorporate the findings of the current study in employee selection. Future study should replicate the current study using employers and workers in a comparative study. Since the current study is descriptive in nature, future survey study should consider causal analysis using structural modelling approach.

## REFERENCE

1. Appelbaum, S.H, Deguire, K.J. and Lay, M. (2005). "The relationship of ethical climate to deviant workplace behavior". *Corporate Governance*, 5(4), 43-55.
2. Appelbaum, S.H., Iaconi, G.D. and Matousek, A. (2007). "Positive and negative deviant workplace behaviors: causes, impacts, and solutions". *Corporate Governance*, 7(5), 586-598.
3. Appelbaum, S.H. and Shapiro, B.T. (2006). "Diagnosis and Remedies for Deviant Workplace Behaviors". *Journal of American Academy of Business*, 9(2), 14-20.
4. Bamfield, J. (2004). "Shrinkage, shoplifting and the cost of retail crime in Europe: a cross-sectional analysis of major retailers in 16 European countries". *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 32(4/5), 235-241.
5. Baumol, W. (1990). Entrepreneurship: Productive, unproductive, and destructive. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 11, 3-22.
6. Garber, A., & Walkup, C. (2004). No. 7 Theft protection plan key to locking in profits. *Nation's Restaurant News*, 38(21), 92-98.
8. Greenberg, J. (2002). Who stole the money and when? Individual and situational determinants of employee theft. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 89(1), 985- 1003.

- 
9. Greenberg, L., & Barling, J. (1996). "Employee Theft", *Journal of Organizational Behavior (1986-1998)*, 49-64.
  10. Hollinger, R. C., & Clark, J. P. (1983). Deterrence in the Workplace: Perceived Certainty, Perceived Severity, and Employee Theft. *Social Forces*, 62, 398-418.
  11. Korolishin, J. (2003). Happy employees steal less, supermarket survey reveals. *Stores*, 85(2), 60.
  12. Loo, R. (2003), "Are women more ethical than men? Findings from three independent studies", *Women in Management Review*, 18(4), 169-181.
  13. Mishra, B. K., & Prasad, A. (2006). "Minimizing Retail Shrinkage due to Employee Theft." *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management* 34(11), 817-832. (Special issue on retail crime and loss prevention.
  14. Moorthy, K. M., Seetharaman, A., Somasundaram, N. R., & Gopalan, M. (2009). Preventing employee theft and fraud. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 12(2), 259-268.
  15. Murphy, K. (1993). *Honesty in the workplace*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing. 1993.
  16. O'Fallon, M. J., & Butterfield, K. D. (2005), "A Review of The Empirical Ethical Decision-Making Literature: 1996-2003", *Journal of Business Ethics*, 59, 375-413.
  17. Peterson, D. K. (2002). "Deviant Workplace Behavior and the Organization's Ethical Climate", *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 7, 47-61.
  18. Robinson, S. L., & Bennett, R. J. (1995). "A typology of deviant workplace behaviors: A multidimensional scaling study", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 38, No. 2, 555-572.
  19. Robinson, S. L., & Greenberg, J. (1998), "Employees Behaving Badly: Dimensions, Determinants, and Dilemmas in the Study of Workplace Deviance", *Journal of Organizational Behavior (1986-1998)*, 1-30.
  20. Robinson, S. & O'Leary-Kelly, A. (1998). Monkey see, monkey do: The influence of work groups on the antisocial behaviour of employees. *Academy of management Journal*, 41, 658-673.
  21. Simon, M. & Houghton, S. (2003). The relationship between overconfidence and the introduction of risky products: Evidence from a field study. *Academy of Management Journal*,
  22. 46, 139-149.

23. Trevino, L. K., Victor, B., & Shapiro, D. L. (1993). Peer reporting of unethical behavior: The influence of justice evaluations and social context factors. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 12, 253–263.
24. Valentine, S. R., & Rittenburg, T. L. (2007). “The Ethical Decision Making of Men and Women Executives in International Business Situation”, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 71, 125-134.
25. Walsh, J. A. (2000). International Foundation for Protection Officers.
26. Weber, J., Kurke, L. & Pentico, D. (2003). Why do employees steal? *Business and Society*, 42, 359-374.
27. Wells, J. T. (2001). “Enemies Within.” *Journal of Accountancy* 192, 31-35.
28. Yeboah, A. S., Ansu-Mensah, P., & Adjei, K. (2012). Do employees steal as a reaction to unfair pay? A survey of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) Workers in Sunyani, Ghana. *International Journal of Innovative Research in Management*, 3(1), 1-10.