



Ethical Leadership as a Predictor of Work Deviance among Public Sector Workers in Administrative Offices in the Cape Coast Metropolis, Ghana: A Structural Equation Modeling Approach

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ABSTRACT

The study focused on ethical leadership and work behaviours of public sector workers in administrative offices in the Cape Coast Metropolis, Ghana. The quantitative cross-sectional survey was adopted to survey all public sector workers in active service in the metropolis. Ninety-two respondents were recruited online for the study. Data for the study were gathered using adapted ethical leadership and work deviance scales. Data collected were analyzed inferentially using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach. The study revealed that people orientation ($b=.222, p=.000$), fairness ($b=.351, p=.000$), concern for sustainability ($b=.432, p=.000$), and ethical guidance ($b=-.287, p=.000$) significantly predicted work deviance. The study concluded that there is a high tendency of ethical leadership style that could either maximize or minimize the likelihood of deviant work behaviour occurrence at the workplace in the Cape Coast Metropolis. It is recommended that public sector leaders in Cape Coast Metropolis should first identify the root cause of work deviance in the workplaces within the Metropolis and put measures such positive rewards, effective supervision, and infusion of ethical programmes into the workplace culture to minimize work deviance among administrative officers in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

Keywords: Ethical leadership, Work deviance, Public sector, Workers, Cape coast metropolis, Ghana

INTRODUCTION

In modern workplaces, all leadership styles are important, but ethical leadership is particularly important especially in the African and Ghanaian setting because the tenets of politics, culture, and religion are deep rooted and connected to leadership in Ghana [1]. Work ethic is a cultural norm that adds spiritual and positive worth to doing a good job [2]. Because of the increasing complexity of businesses and the development in unethical and unlawful work conditions in most organisations globally, managers and experts have considered work ethic and ethical management to minimise work deviance and provide

crucial ethical counsel to staff [3]. Research posits that leadership behaviours impact employee commitment and job satisfaction, which impacts turnover [4]. This implies, leaders have a significant impact on the morality of a society or organization [5]. According to, moral cynicism is caused when a leader's behaviour does not align with common moral values [6].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership is "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication,

reinforcement, and decision-making" [7]. Ethical leadership has been defined by various theorists [8]. Leadership based on normative rules and values that are manifested by behaviours, actions, decisions, and the executive methods of encouraging or punishing ethical or unethical behaviours in organizational space [9]. To make fair decisions, care for subordinates' feelings, and create fair work environments [10]. The leader's influence on employee behaviour, the ethical aspect of leadership is vital [11]. Studies have shown that ethical leader instils ethical behaviour in his subordinates and may also contribute to an organization and society development [12]. Without ethical leadership, organizations may end up harming the entire world" [13]. This concept of ethical leadership arose, focusing on the moral and ethical dimensions of leadership behaviour which has similar characteristics to that of African context [14]. Notwithstanding, other studies have also shown that negative management and leadership styles (authoritarian and dictatorial relationships regardless of employees' dignity, needs, abilities, and limitations) increases employee tension and anxiety [15]. Rather, positive aspects of managers' behaviour help employees relax about their roles, responsibilities, authority, contradictions, conflicts, and feelings of disability [16]. From the ongoing discussion, ethical leadership can influence employees at all levels through ethical space and pattern processes [17]. Ethical leadership includes three aspects: fairness, power sharing, and role clarification [18]. However, adds ethical guidance, honesty, tolerance, and people-oriented leadership [19]. argue that ethical leaders should let followers present their ideas and listen to their concerns rather than just involving followers in decision making [20].

According to Bandura's Social Learning Theory, leaders must be reliable active models for their followers to regard them as ethical [21]. The theory fosters organizational health, honesty, and trustworthiness by incorporating values and attitudes into daily behaviours, decision-making, and encore [22]. In this regard, found a link between Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and employee work deviance and concluded that leaders can adopt LMX to minimize work deviance [23]. Examined the impact of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) on employee work deviance and organizational citizenship [24]. They thought work deviance was an inappropriate work behavior [25]. They also concluded that low LMX increases work deviance and decreases organizational citizenship behaviour [26]. Found that leader-member exchange reduces envy and reduces employee knowledge sharing [27]. Envy also influences non-citizenship behaviour of employees [28]. According to the researchers, today's managers have to demonstrate that organizations require more than just rules and regulations, and that tool is called ethics [29]. Furthermore, Experts believe that combining ethics and law is necessary, as is replacing

social control with self-control [30]. Work ethic has recently been given a lot of attention [31]. The perception of ethics is the foundation for creating and maintaining an ethical system in society and, thus, in organizations [32].

Work Deviance

Deviant workplace behaviour are those that are done on purpose by members of an organization and are in direct opposition to the organization's goals and interests [33]. Workplace counterproductive actions can range from low-intensity behaviour like rumour mongering and inappropriate internet use to more serious behaviour like harassment, sabotage, theft, and physical assault [34]. Employees and the organization can both suffer as a result of deviant behavior [35]. According to Case's analysis, almost 95 percent of businesses are vulnerable to employee theft and deceit [36]. Because of the detrimental financial and personal implications of deviant actions in the workplace, identifying the antecedents of such behaviours is critical [37]. One of these precursors is the perception of rejection at work [38].

Proposed a model of workplace deviant behaviour in which deviant behaviour is the outcome of the interaction between personality features and job evaluations [39]. A number of researchers have found a link between personality factors and workplace deviant conduct. In similar study, Robinson and Bennett posit that activities that are considered aberrant in the workplace are also unethical [40]. The genuine distinction between ethical conduct and deviant behaviour is that ethical behaviours are based on true or false rules and rules such as justice, law, or other valuable ethical principles, whereas deviant behaviours are focused on behaviours that break the organization's norms [41]. As a result, it is reasonable to conclude that the prediction of deviant behaviours based on collective employee judgments of workplace principles and ethics is logical [42].

Peterson classified the elements explaining deviant behaviours in the workplace into individual, social, interpersonal, and organizational aspects, citing [43]. Individual traits such as perceptual and cognitive features, as well as organizational aspects such as space and organizational climate, can all have a role in the prevalence of deviant behaviours in the workplace [44].

Furthermore, proposed that workplace deviant conduct is an individual and intentional activity that is referred to as negative deviant behaviour in the workplace; yet it violates organizational norms and occurs in two forms: interpersonal and organizational [45]. This implies that employees are continually questioning either the organization's work (organizational deviant behaviour) or the performance of its members (interpersonal deviant behaviour), or both [46]. An organizational deviance, in reality, is a set of behaviours shared by a person and an organization (e.g., coming late at work) [47]. Interpersonal deviant behaviour includes behaviours such as embarrassing one another, quarrelling, and behaving rudely in the workplace [48].

Many companies try to predict their employees' aberrant

conduct while they are still on the job [49]. People intentionally choose to engage in these behaviours, personality traits are more likely to impact them than ability-related factors [50]. Personality has the potential to influence anti-deviant behaviour through influencing people's perceptions, assessments of the environment, documentation of the events' causes, emotional responses, and ability to avoid aggressiveness and display deviant behaviour [51].

Different scholars have identified, introduced, and researched deviant unproductive behaviour [52]. For example, It looked into the structural model of the relationship between destructive leadership and the employees' tendency for violence and deviant behavior [53]. According to them, leadership and, more specifically, leadership styles, are one of the most influential elements in employee behaviour in the workplace [54]. They claimed that the proclivity for violence is a mediating factor in the link between destructive leadership and deviant behaviour. The association between organizational pressures and counterproductive deviant behaviour was explored. They discovered a link between organizational pressures (one of which is a poor and damaging relationship with supervisors) and counterproductive deviant behaviour. It is noted that destructive leaders engage in damaging activities with their staff, causing them to be prone to violence and deviant behaviour. Destructive leadership has a significantly negative relationship with positive attitude toward the leader, well-being, and employee performance, according to, but it has a significantly positive relationship with willingness to turnover, counterproductive behaviour, and resistance and disobedience to the leader.

Theoretical Framework

Several theories have been used to study workplace aberrant behaviour. Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT) is one of the most popular ideas. This theory considers ethics to be a significant predictor of deviant behaviour intention. Ethical leadership allows leaders to model appropriate behaviour that will be replicated by subordinates, while also learning from employees' good ideals and incorporating them into the organization. Being a role model in the organization allows leaders to motivate employees to follow the organization's laws and regulations. Recent research shows a negative association between ethical leadership and deviant behaviour. SLT also highlights the importance of role modeling, whereby organizations' excellent values will have a chain impact on employees. Leaders are seen as legitimate role models for good principles. Also, as leaders can reprimand or reward personnel for unethical or ethical behaviour, they must possess excellent virtues. Employees must learn about corporate ethical behaviour by monitoring the surroundings as well as their personal experiences, according to SLT.

Blau's Social Exchange Theory is also widely used to understand employer behaviour. The hypothesis

suggests that corporate citizenship behaviour and perceived organizational support are two predictors of employee behaviour. This approach emphasizes the positive interaction between employer and employee. Hence, poor treatment by superiors or leaders in organizations causes unhappiness among individuals or employees. Employees who work in tough and unpleasant environments are more likely to show insulting behaviour.

The General Strain Theory [GST] explains aberrant workplace behaviour as unfavorable behaviour that can lead to workplace deviance. GST has three basic components. The first component is about stimuli and goals, and how people can be affected by not reaching goals, dangerous stimuli, or lack of regarded stimuli. The second component is about the conditioning factors that influence deviant or non-deviant behaviour when faced with stress. The last component represents the idea that individuals are prone to behave defiantly to lessen the effect of strain in the absence of favorable adaptations. This idea has been used in studies involving government employees on workplace aberrant behaviour.

The social control theory also explains workplace aberrant behaviour. Families and religion are important subjective norms under this notion. The hypothesis suggests that focusing on family and spirituality can significantly minimize aberrant behaviour. This hypothesis can be used to assess an employee's spirituality in relation to their work attitude and behaviour defines social norm deviation as four distinct concepts: attachment, commitment, participation, and belief. The degree of social bonding with parents, friends, teachers, religious leaders, and other community members is the most essential social bonding factor. It is a social, professional and economic investment in society. "Idle hands are the devil's workshop," therefore involvement is actively participating in prosocial tasks that allow less time for social deviance. The fourth notion, belief, states that those who believe in social standards are less likely to defy those standards.

Moreover, several researches have been done on identifying various deviant working practices, with administrators and organizations heavily involved. Furthermore, failure to address employee mental health concerns such as personal and organizational deviance causes numerous issues for the company, including non-citizenship behaviour, loss of self-respect, and job loss. Work deviance is an uncomfortable emotion that is shared by all people regardless of culture. This emotion is caused by unfavorable comparisons. According to previous research, leaders who treat their subordinates fairly and emphasize the importance of ethics reduce deviant behaviour (Smith & Kim, 2007). Moreover, found that ethical leadership reduces employee deviance. Thus, prior research shows a negative link between ethical leadership and workplace deviance. In a study among Chinese working class found a significant positive effect of ethical leadership on work deviance but the effect size was small. Contrarily, a study among Iranian by) found

that the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable has been supported by data and the path which relates these two variables is significantly negative (it is significant at the error level of 5 percent). This showed that, with 95 percent confidence, the increased ethical leadership decreases deviant work behaviour. According to the findings of a study conducted, ethical leadership has the potential to influence the establishment of an ethical atmosphere in an organization, which in turn has the potential to negatively impact deviant behaviour in the workplace. The findings also suggest that ethical leadership has an impact on deviant behaviour in the workplace, either directly or indirectly, depending on the situation. Among the indirect consequences, this ethical leadership is a better perception of the ethical climate in the workplace, which will eventually lead to a reduction in deviant behaviour in the workplace.

The Ghanaian context

Ethical leadership is an important component of work productivity because it has the potential to influence workplace behaviour of employees. In Ghana, the working class is more than those who are not gainfully engaged argue that among those who are engaged, majority of them are public sector workers. With this public sector workers dominating, it is rumored that there are several work deviant behaviour emanating from ethical leadership in most public institutions. For example, in recent times, there was a rift between leaders and subordinates of the Ghana Airport Company as workers alleged leaders were insensitive to their plight as management planned ceding responsibility to a private company (). A good number of studies have been conducted in Ghana with regards ethical leadership, productive work attitudes and organizational climate in the private sector but less is known about leadership's ethical dimensions and work deviance in the public sector. Scholars argue that since few studies have examined the link between ethical leadership and workplace deviance, in-depth research is needed to clarify the relationship. In a study conduct in a public sector in the Central Region of Ghana posit that a good number of leaders exhibited the following characteristics of ethical leadership at the workplace-fairness, role sharing and power classification. They posit that ethical leadership worked fairly well among leaders in the public sector because most Ghanaians are religious and culture fanatics. affirmed and posited that because leadership in the Ghanaian context is culturally and religiously linked, a good number of Ghanaian basic Senior High School leaders have been able to minimize work deviance such as lateness, absenteeism, and other unprofessional behaviour in their schools by adopting ethical leadership. From the ongoing discussions, it can be deduced that the social control theory, which has its roots in culture and religion is the most common adopted by leaders to minimize or eliminate deviant behaviour at the workplace in most Ghanaian

institutions. Therefore, the current study was designed to examine the impact of ethical leadership relationships on employees' deviant conduct, utilizing sample from public sector workers in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Thus, this study tests the hypothesis as:

Methodology

The study is a quantitative cross-sectional survey design. The design meets the requirement of the study because different public sector workers from different public institutions were surveyed. With an unknown population, a sample of 92 public sector workers was surveyed through WhatsApp platforms (online google forms). The online data collection was employed because of the human restrictions imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The online data collection was made possible after the researcher reached out to sectional heads of the various state-owned institutions in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The sample comprised of those with a minimum of Senior High School Qualification. All public sector employees in the Cape Coast Metropolis without the minimum educational level requirement were excluded as well as those on retirement. Adapted Likert-type scales were used to gather the needed data for the study. The scales were Deviant Workplace Questionnaire [2-dimensions; 18-items; $\alpha=.828$] developed and Ethical Leadership at Work [7-dimensions; 38-items; $\alpha=.923$] developed by. Informed consent forms were attached to the adapted scales so that respondents could indicate their willingness to partake in the study than being compelled to do so. The data collected were electronically encrypted to avoid third-party access so that confidentiality information and anonymity of respondents could be ensured. The data were analyzed inferentially using structural equation modeling (SEM).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data were inferentially analyzed with the structural equation modeling. This was made possible after data cleaning and testing statistical assumptions. The dimensions of ethical leadership were used to regress on the employee work deviance. Results are presented below (Table 1 and Figure 1):

Table 1: Demographic Description.

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	62	67.4
Female	30	32.6
Total	92	100
Age		
Below 25	1	1.1
25 – 35	75	81.5
36 – 45	13	14.1
46 – 55	2	2.2
Above 55	1	1.1
Total	92	100
Highest Level of Education		
SHS	2	2.2
Diploma/ HND	15	16.3
Degree	55	59.8

Masters/PHD	20	29.7
Total	92	100
Length of Service in Organisation		
Less than 2 years	24	26.1
2 -5 years	53	57.6
6 – 10 years	8	8.7
Over 10 years	7	7.6
Total	92	100
Category of Employment		
National Service	12	13.1
NABCO	40	43.5
Permanent Staff	32	34.8
Other	8	8.7
Total	92	100

DWB	<	E	-	.2	-	.00	-	Accepted
	--	G	.287	2	6.6	0	.20	
	-			4	09		9	
DWB	<	R	-	.2	-	.00	-	Accepted
	--	C	.077	4	6.6	0	.05	
	-			3	66		8	
DWB	<	I	-	.5	-	.00	-	Accepted
	--		.090	1	6.6	0	.04	
	-			3	51		1	

Source: Online Data (2021)

Table 2 shows results for the dimensions such as People Orientation (PO), Fairness (F), Power Sharing (PS), Concern for Sustainability (CS), ethical guidance (EG), Role Clarification (RC), and Integrity (I) under ethical leadership. The study revealed that people orientation (b=.222, p=.000), fairness (b=.351, p=.000), concern for sustainability (b=.432, p=.000), and ethical guidance (b=-.287, p=.000) significantly predicted more of work deviance but power sharing, role clarification and integrity predicted less of work deviance. Base on the findings, it can be deduced that leaders who see they to be part of their subordinates are likely to positively influence their work behaviour where these subordinates might capitalise on the liberty being offered them to engage in unorthodox work behaviour. Again, the findings of the study suggest that leaders who engage their subordinates judiciously without any form of bias are capable of influencing their work behaviour positively, where these subordinates might see their leaders as being too stringent with equality and eventually rebel and engage in unproductive work behaviour. Furthermore, there is an implication that leaders who strive to improve work output and sustain the workforce are likely to positively influence their subordinates' work behaviour while those leaders who exhibit ethical guidance leadership by being strict, follows work values and norms without given room for mistakes might negatively influence work behaviour of their subordinates, where these subordinates might think of personal and group norms before engaging in any act, hence the less likelihood to engage in unproductive work behaviour. In terms of degree of contribution among the predictors (ethical leadership) onto the criterion (work deviance), concern for sustainability predicted better, followed by fairness and ethical guidance. However, ethical guidance predicted negatively on work deviance. The results imply that a unit increase in the significant positive predictors will lead to a unit increase in the criterion and a unit increase in the significant negative predictors will lead to a unit decrease in the criterion.

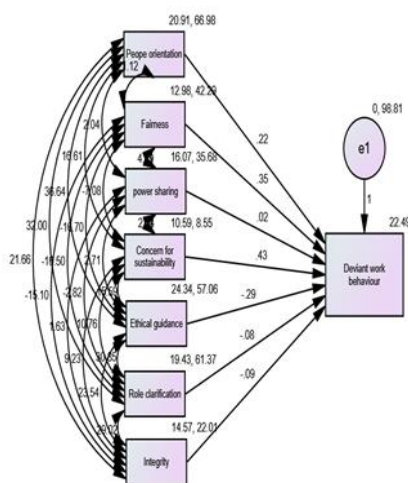


Figure 1: Structural Model.

The structural model indicates the covariance of the dimensions of ethical leadership and the recursive contributions to deviant work behaviour of employees. Table 2 gives further explanation.

Table 2: Regression Weights.

Parameter			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Estimate Std	Decision
DWB	<	P	.222	.197	6.655	.000	.175	Accepted
	--	O						
	-							
DWB	<	F	.351	.202	6.641	.000	.220	Accepted
	--							
	-							
DWB	<	P	.025	.199	6.598	.000	.014	Accepted
	--	S						
	-							
DWB	<	C	.432	.604	6.688	.000	.121	Accepted
	--	S						
	-							

The findings of the current study indicate that leaders who exhibit the zeal for job sustenance, fairness, and people orientation in the institutions they lead may result in deviant work behaviour exhibited by public sector employees. The findings of the current study disagree with the finding. In their various studies, it was found that ethical leadership reduces employee deviance, indicating a negative link between ethical leadership and workplace

deviance. However, the findings of this study have shown that when public sector leaders show ethical guidance by preaching job morality and faith, it is possible to reduce potential work deviant behaviour among public sector employees.

This finding of the study supports a study finding among Iranian workers conducted. The study showed that ethical leadership prediction on deviant work behaviour was significantly negative. The current study findings further support several other studies revelations such as, indicated that ethical leadership has the potential to influence the establishment of an ethical atmosphere in an organization, which in turn has the potential to negatively impact deviant behaviour in the workplace. The findings also suggest that ethical leadership has an impact on deviant behaviour in the workplace, either directly or indirectly, depending on the situation. On the basis of the findings, it is clear that ethical leadership exhibited by public sector leaders positively and negatively predict work deviant behaviours of public sector employees in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

Implication for policy and practice

The study found ethical guidance, role clarification and integrity as components of ethical leadership have significant negative influences on deviant work behaviour of employees. With this, if leadership of public institutions show ethical guidance, clarify what subordinates are required to do and remain honest, workers in such institutions are likely not to revolt or exhibit deviant work behaviours. This might be the ideal for the progress of such state-owned institutions. For progress to be made and for productivity to be increased in the job, there is the need for leaders to exhibit the skills that will augment progress than courting the rift of employees. On the contrary, if leaders of public institution exhibit ethical leadership skills such as people orientation, job fairness, power sharing and concern for job sustainability, workers are likely to show some form of work deviant behaviours. To avert this, it is important for public sector employees to be educated through regular workshops on job sustainability, employee responsibility and acceptance of work ethics and morals. Workers with objective mind-sets for the job they do might not have any qualms with ethical leadership, hence the zeal to corroborate with leaders for job success and productivity. Based on the findings of the study, it is important for leaders of state-owned institutions in the Cape Coast Metropolis and other parts of Ghana to engage in dialogue with various public sector workers to educate them on the need for them to play their roles in making such institutions problem-free between leaders and subordinates. This would help make workers feel ownership of the jobs they do and in the long run, contribute their quota to the development of the economy.

Furthermore, It is also important to educate public

sector workers on their civic responsibility for them to protect and project state-owned institutions when given the opportunity to work in them. Once, they become aware of this, it is possible issues of leader-member scuffle will decline. Out of what literature present it is clear that a positive relationship between leaders of state-owned institutions and their subordinates will reduce deviant work behaviour and increase job efficiency, effectiveness and productivity in the long-run.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study posit that other sectors and organizations including public sector institutions in Ghana must maintain, sustain and adopt ethical leadership, create leader employee relationships, and reduce deviant workplace behaviour in order to be effective and efficient. This goal was achieved through the current research which aimed to add to the existing body of knowledge regarding the association between ethical leadership and deviant behaviour at the workplace, as it supports and demonstrates the importance of an ethical leadership style could lead to maximising or reducing the likelihood that deviant work behaviour will emerge at the workplace.

Recommendations for leaders of public sector institutions

It is clear from the findings of the study that organizational deviance has a negative impact on employee performance and presents a challenge to the Public Sector workers in the Cape Coast Metropolis. It is recommended that public sector leaders should first identify the root cause of work deviance in the organization and then try to eliminate it from the organization by promoting clear communications and proper management practices to mitigate the occurrence of employee deviance in the workplace. Leaders must also treat all personnel with dignity and respect, and they must refrain from making distinctions between them. The implementation of sound management practices and the provision of just and equitable rewards are also effective methods of reducing work deviance since the application of justice in these matters reduces the occurrence of deviant work behaviours at the workplace.

Furthermore, public sector leaders in the study area should frequently define regulations for boosting efficiency, creating stability in the quality of services, and contributing to the supervision of the employees' behaviour; if the employees believe that these rules are unfair, they may choose to disregard them entirely. As a result, it is recommended that leaders monitor justice and avoid the occurrence of these bad actions within the business in order to limit deviant behaviour. More so, the reward and compensation system have the potential to induce personnel to engage in illegal or unethical activities. Employees are mainly concerned with their own benefits while they are competing for a reward, and they do not consider the immoral acts that are necessary for

their success.

Leaders in the public sector should also fix the incentive and compensation systems by giving clear criteria regarding payments and the observance of justice, as well as by establishing and enforcing rules, in order to prevent the occurrence of deviant actions in the workplace. Additionally, culture is one of the most effective variables in determining an individual's behaviour and values, and it can have an impact on the incidence of deviant conduct. As a result, it is recommended that the organizational culture be built in such a way that it allows for the engagement of individuals while also providing them with organizational identities. Finally, ethical programs should be incorporated into the workplace culture.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this research as well. A good illustration of this is that the sample for this research was taken from public-sector institutions in the Cape Coast Metropolitan Area in Ghana. In this regard, caution should be exercised when extrapolating the findings of the current study to a broader population. Additionally, current research investigated the relationship between ethical leadership and deviant work behaviour among public sector employees and discovered that some aspects of ethical leadership have the ability to increase or decrease deviant behaviour in the workplace, but that there are a number of other mechanisms that can play a role in ethical leadership and deviant work behaviour in the workplace as well. As a result, in this understudy structure, no further relationship variables have been incorporated in the current research findings. Furthermore, the mediation of the components of the understudy variables was not examined in this study. Furthermore, current study is based on a standard sample size, which appears to be very modest in comparison to previous studies. The current research, in addition, used online approaches to obtain the sample, which may be considered one of the study's shortcomings given the nature of the sample.

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