Counter Productive Work Behaviour and Organizational Productivity of Selected Public Organizations in Cross River State: A Theoretical Review

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine counter productive work behavior and organizational productivity in selected public organizations. A study of Calabar, Ugep and Ikom local government council in Cross River State. The specific objectives were to: examine the extent to which sabotage behavior can affect organizational productivity; examine how theft can affect organizational productivity; and to determine how withdrawal can affect organizational productivity. This study adopted theoretical review methods. Information was gathered using textbooks, journals, published and unpublished journals, libraries and internet applications. Based on the theoretical review, the following findings were revealed thus: there was a significant relationship between sabotage behavior and organizational productivity, there was a significant relationship between theft behavior and organizational productivity, and there was a significant relationship between withdrawal behavior and organizational productivity. In line with the findings, the study recommended that organizations should organise regular enlightenment programmes and formulate appropriate HR policies that would help reduce the level of counterproductive work behaviors among employees. Managers should endeavor to limit the effect and pervasiveness of detrimental behaviors.

Keywords: counter productive work behavior, sabotage behavior, theft, withdrawal, organizational productivity

1. Introduction

Counter productive work behavior can be consequence of personal traits like narcissism and agreeableness dissatisfaction and negative emotions. Besides, unclear job description, employment insecurity, lack of internal career opportunities and inappropriate appraisal system, lack of motivation, abusive supervision, stressful conditions, intent to quit and company contempt (Muafi, 2021), injustice, un-acceptance of peer group, job stress and leader maltreatment are some other stimulus of counter productive work behavior. Counter productive work behavior can take many forms such as theft, sabotage, verbal abuse, withholding of effort, lying, refusing to cooperate, and physical assault. These occur either at i) interpersonal level or ii) organizational level; at interpersonal level these include behaviors (such as aggression, verbal abuse, favoritism and gossip etc.) that affect employees within the organization.

At the organizational level, these refer to the behaviors (absenteeism, misuse of the employer's assets and withdrawal) that affect the organization. A plethora of studies have been conducted to study myriad perspectives of counter productive work behavior. Counter productive work behavior embraces a variety of acts including:

absenteeism, spreading of nasty rumors, sabotage, verbal abuse, theft, physical assault, stealing from coworkers, or coming late to workplace, lying, refusing to cooperate, physical assault, withdrawal, and withholding of efforts.

One of the major concerns of many organizations that need urgent attention is counterproductive work behavior which is assumed to be a problem that violates significant organizational norms and threatens the wellbeing of an organization, its members, or both. Counterproductive work behavior is an urgent concern of the organization because it is assumed to cost organization billions of dollars each year. Negative emotions are related to counterproductive work behavior because employees who create problem in others' work and not help others usually have negative emotions. Counterproductive workplace behavior is a class of behaviors that acts against the interests of the organization, which individuals, usually, consciously choose to engage in.

Sackett (2023) treatment, counterproductive work behavior is any intentional behavior on the part of an organization member viewed by the organization as contrary to its legitimate interests. Increase in counterproductive work behavior has been linked to decrease in performance or productivity, employer dissatisfaction, and greater psychological distress. Negative employee behavior is related to behavior of employees with others which in turn may reduce other employee performance and cause conflict.

2. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to examine counter productive work behavior and organizational productivity. The specific objectives are:

i. To examine the extent to which sabotage behavior can affect organizational productivity;

ii. To examine how theft behavior can affect organizational productivity;

iii. To determine how withdrawal behavior can affect organizational productivity.

3. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Counterproductive work behavior (CWB) summarizes multiple actions performed by employees that harm the organization and people in the organization. CWB, as a form of deviation, is defined as voluntary behavior (employees) that violates significant organizational norms and thus threatens the welfare of an organization, its members, or both. CWB's behavior is not only dangerous for the target but may also have negative consequences for the perpetrators themselves. Besides, effects in both directions will indicate stressful work conditions and adverse behavior. For example, when someone takes company property, he will always feel guilty, and the target will also have suspicion towards the perpetrator. The loss occurs to the personal reputation of employees involved in counterproductive work behavior. Attention and growing concern for this behavior also seem to be filled by various terms and definitions.

Based on a literature survey of the dimensions of counterproductive work behavior, this construct has several dimensions in common, seen from 1) the purpose of the violation 2) the severity of the violation behavior, 3) the target of the violator, 4) the form of the violation committed, 5) the model of the violation operation / the styles, 6) intent/motives of violations 7) how the relationship of violations with the suitability of the task, 8) violators. From the similarity of the above dimensions, the researcher only took two aspects, namely the target of the violator and the severity of the violation behavior and the violation target. The reason the researcher bases consideration through these two dimensions is because the objective is an important thing that is always someone's goal in acting. Organizations that consist of a collection of several individuals cannot denied appearing various behaviors that can be directed at the organization itself or can be at the individual level (leader) or subordinate.

The existence of a person in an organization also limits a person in expressing his behavior. Still, the pressure from the cognitive aspect, the problem of conflict, makes someone realize his behavior in the hardest, real, or veiled things to protect himself. CWB embraces a variety of acts including: absenteeism, spreading of nasty rumors, sabotage, verbal abuse, theft, physical assault, stealing from coworkers, or coming late to workplace, lying, refusing to cooperate, physical assault, withdrawal, and withholding of efforts   have classified variety of these detrimental behaviors in into five major categories called dimension including: abuse, production deviation, sabotage, theft and withdrawal.

3.1 Counterproductive Work Behavior in Public Organization

In many organizations, it is expected that individuals exhibit a wide range of work behaviors that would impact positively on organizational well-being. Yet, this is not always the case as some employees also have the tendency to indulge in work behaviors that are inimical to organizational interest and wellbeing. This type of workplace behaviors had at various times been described using terms such as 'workplace deviance', 'antisocial behavior' and 'dysfunctional behavior.' Though the terms may differ from study to study, all forms of harmful workplace behaviors are subsumed under the broader construct of 'counterproductive work behavior' (CWB).

Counterproductive work behavior (CWB) refers to intentional workplace behaviors that deviate from established organizational norms and harm the legitimate interest of the organization. Fox (2015) perceive CWB as "volitional acts that harm organizations or people in organizations". Employees that engage in CWB direct such harmful behaviors at the organization or co-workers. While organizational CWB describes employee behavior that is targeted at harming the organization, interpersonal CWB illustrates employee behavior that is targeted at harming co-workers. Though CWB studies have majorly been conducted along the lines of organizational CWB and interpersonal CWB, opine that other classifications of CWB are also useful depending on the research questions being asked.

For example, Sackett (2023) postulated eleven forms of CWB in the workplace as theft and related behaviors, destruction of property, misuse of information, unauthorized use of time and resources, unsafe behavior, poor attendance, poor-quality work, alcohol use on the job, drug use, inappropriate verbal actions and inappropriate physical actions often exhibited by organizational members. They further grouped these forms of CWB into two broad dimensions of interpersonal-organizational and task relevance dimensions. Spector (2016) collapse earlier classifications of CWB along the lines of interpersonal CWB and organizational CWB into five forms of abuse, sabotage, withdrawal, production deviance, theft and abuse. While abuse, sabotage, withdrawal, production deviance, and theft are categorized along the line of organizational CWB, abuse is listed as interpersonal CWB since it depicts "harmful and nasty behaviors" often targeted at co-workers.

3.1.1 Sabotage

Sabotage, in its literal meanings refers to damaging the physical property or assets of an organization or employer. It is the behavior of employees that intends to: reduce the productivity of the organization, coerce higher authority for special consideration by the means of tampering with equipment, intentionally damaging assets and humiliating customers. Production deviance and sabotage are the two types of behaviors that signify i) failure to do a task or do it correctly ii) intentionally destroying something. Although production deviance is a passive and sabotage is active approach, but in fact, both are entangled. Misuse of information and communication technology beside organizational concerns is also an aspect of sabotage. Production deviance is less severe than sabotage. Sabotage happens mainly due to instrumental aggression, frustration and anger (Bashir, 2022).

3.1.2 Theft

Theft is stealing the physical property or assets of an organization or employer. Galperin, (2022) figures theft as one of the facets of counterproductive behavior that compels individuals towards the breach of the organizational norms. By theft employees intend to intentionally harm the organizations for the fulfillment of their instrumental motives. Theft can take many forms such as of misleading records, deception and stealing cash. Mustaine (2022) argue that theft is caused by three major reasons: economic need, job dissatisfaction, and injustice. Organizational & interpersonal conflicts Anjum (2024) anger and other negative emotions are some other reasons that can also cause theft. Another reason of theft is the improper control system due that employees start perceiving that they will not be caught. In USA alone, each year billions of dollars are misplaced due to employee theft, organization should focus on controlling theft by establishing best possible policies and well planned security system (Anjum, 2024).

3.1.3 Withdrawal

Withdrawal consists of those negative behaviors that reduce the amount of working time than the required time by the organization. It includes coming late at work or leaving early from the workplace, absenteeism, and taking longer breaks than officially permitted. Absenteeism is the basic form of withdrawal which occurs due to psychological disorders, stress, social norms, culture conflict, and individual differences. Withdrawal is that behavior by which an employee attempts to avoid a situation rather than harming the organization and its members CWBs such as; employee theft and fraud are common occurrences in an organization, costing U.S. organizations an estimated loss of $50 billion annually and are responsible for about a 20 % of failure of businesses. It has also been estimated that 33% to 75% of all employees have engaged in behaviors such as Abuse against others, Production deviance, Sabotage, Theft, Withdrawal etc. (Anjum, 2024).

3.1.4 Production Deviance

Production deviance is the failure to perform the job tasks effectively the way they are supposed to be completed. In this, the employee intentionally affects the efficiency of the organization by slowing down the quantity and quality of work. When employee decisively does not perform a task which one is capable of performing; one is indulged in production deviance. This is also a serious dimension of CWB; because it affects organizational performance by deliberately creating problems against organizational success. Production deviance occurs due to inadequate technology, inappropriate environment, and heavy workload, leaving early, taking excessive breaks, and intentionally working slowly. Some researchers point out that production and

property deviance is more likely to involve employees in workplace deviance (Bashir, 2022).

Production deviance is also caused by aggression at workplace; but it is more inactive than sabotage, is less visible and can be difficult to prove. Research has reported that the employees who are young and new to their job and having low-paying places are more likely to involve in Production deviance and property deviance. Having low level jobs and dissatisfaction may also result in production deviance (Bashir, 2022).

3.1.5 Empirical Review

Roxana (2023) focused on ascertaining the relationship between job stressor, CWB and employees' intention to quit and found that job stressor was a significant determinant of CWB. The influence of perceived high workload on CWB among nurses in Nigeria has also been examined. The results revealed that perceived high workload has a significant influence on CWB.

Umemezia (2019) examined counterproductive work behavior among Local Government Employees in Edo State, Nigeria. This study examined the forms and level of prevalence of counterproductive work behaviors among local government employees in Edo State, Nigeria. It also ascertained the relationship between psychological contract breach and counterproductive work behaviors. A cross-sectional research design was employed, and data were gathered through the use of a questionnaire which was administered on 319 sample respondents, out of which 282 questionnaires were retrieved and found usable, representing a response rate of 88.4%. The data obtained were analysed using statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation and ANOVA analysis. The results of the study revealed that the forms of counterproductive work behavior investigated (i.e., sabotage, withdrawal, theft and abuse) are exhibited at a moderate level among local government employees. The results also indicated that psychological contract breach has a significant influence on counterproductive work behaviors that is organizational and interpersonal in nature. It was recommended that the local governments should fulfil their part of the psychological contract. The study also recommends that the local government should organize regular enlightenment programmes and formulate appropriate HR policies that would help reduce the level of counterproductive work behaviors among employees.

Malik (2019) examined Counterproductive Work Behaviors as an Outcome of Job Burnout among High School Teachers. The study was aimed at examining the role of job burnout in predicting counterproductive work behaviors (CWB) among high school teachers. Maslach Burnout Inventory-ES were used to measure the constructs. The study comprised two phases. Phase-I of the study aimed at translating the scales from English into Urdu and the Phase-II of the study was carried out to explore the role of three factors of job burnout (including emotional exhaustion, reduced personal accomplishment and depersonalization) in predicting withdrawal abuse, and sabotage (the three forms of CWB). Multiple regression analysis revealed that reduced personal accomplishment and depersonalization were significant positive predictors of withdrawal and sabotage, whereas emotional exhaustion and depersonalization were found to be significant positive predictors of abuse. Limitations and implications have also been discussed.

Parvez (2024) examined counterproductive behavior at Work: A Comparison of Blue Collar and White Collar Workers Counterproductive behavior at workplace has emerged as a major area of concern for researchers, theorists and managers in organizations due to its heavy cost and disruptive nature. Every organization thus endeavors to limit the effects and pervasiveness of these detrimental behaviors. This research investigates the magnitude of counterproductive work behaviors in a group of 400 blue collar and white collar workers. Three self- reported instruments used in this study are, Minnesota Job Satisfaction Scale, the Interpersonal Conflict Scale (ICAW) and the Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (CWB-C). Results are deduced by applying several techniques of descriptive and inferential statistics such as mean rank analysis, independent samples t-test, Pearson correlation and regression. Results show that a statistically significant difference exists in the magnitude of counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs) in blue and white collar workers. A high degree of job satisfaction and minimal degrees of interpersonal conflicts and counterproductive work behaviors are found in white collar workers. While, low level of job satisfaction and high degrees of interpersonal conflicts and counterproductive work behaviors are reported in blue collar workers. The results of the study also bring forward the predictability of CWB on the basis of the magnitude of interpersonal conflicts and job satisfaction. It is concluded that the job satisfaction has a diminishing effect on counterproductive behaviors.

Tiarapuspa (2020) investigated Antecedent Counterproductive Work Behavior: Exploration in Services Industry. This research is in the form of a conceptual study about the construct of counterproductive work behavior that occurs in Indonesia, especially in the service industry, both conducted by leaders and subordinates. The study results found that employees' counterproductive behavior can be categorized into four dimensions, namely: production deviance, property deviance, personal aggression, political aggression, this is following the results of previous research conducted by Robinson and Bennet. The study was tested by performing a Multi Dimension Technique (MDS) through an open questionnaire distributed to employees (17 leaders and 32 subordinates). The results of the study are useful to be a guide for leaders to understand their employees.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on social exchange theory:

Social exchange theory by Blau (1964)

This study is anchored on the social exchange theory propounded by Blau in 1964. Social exchange theory holds that employees will discharge their contractual obligations to their organisation for as long as the other party which happens to be employers stand by the rule of the exchange. Social exchange theory is based on the principle of reciprocity which is to suggest that the quality of the exchange of resources between the parties would predict positive or negative outcomes. Employees who perceive that their employer has violated the terms of the contract, whether actual or psychological would most likely reciprocate by withdrawing their loyalty and job commitment and invariably resort to acts that are counterproductive in other to get back at the organization. The relationship between psychological contract breach and two targets of CWB *i.e.* the organization and people in the organization. While organizational CWB depicts CWB that is targeted at harming the organization, interpersonal CWB describes CWB that is targeted at harming co-workers. From a social exchange perspective and consistent with the norm of reciprocity, individuals will reciprocate unfulfilled obligations on the part of the organization by engaging in certain actions, which might not be beneficial to the organization.

Hence, employees that perceive psychological contract breach may reciprocate by engaging in CWB. Counterproductive work behavior may be understood within the framework of Social Exchange Theory (SET). SET is an influential paradigm in examination of any exchange relationship, which posits that human relationships are formed by the use of a subjective cost-benefit analysis. Its basic propositions are that people tend to repeat actions that were rewarded in the past, and the more often a particular behavior has resulted in a reward the more likely it is that a person will implement it. Importantly, SET claims that social relationships are based on trust that gestures of goodwill will be reciprocated.

Social exchange theory was used to understand workplace behavior. In a recent meta-analysis, Colquitt (2023) indicated that in the past decade many organizational researches have focused on social exchange as a type of interpersonal relationship, drawing mainly on Blau's (1964) theorizing, and that SET was the dominant approach for examining reactions to justice perceptions. The results of the meta-analysis point to strong relationships between justice dimensions and indicators of social exchange. Specifically, social exchange variables such as trust, organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, and leader-member exchange, were found to be important to relationships between justice, task performance, and citizenship behavior. In the past, social exchange in an organizational context was proposed to be conceptualized at two levels: (a) global exchange between employees and the organization and (b) dyadic relationships between employees and their supervisors.

4. Methodology

This study adopted theoretical review methods. Information was gathered using textbooks, journals, published and unpublished journals, libraries and internet applications.

5. Conclusion

The study empirically examined counter productive work behavior and organizational productivity. The study revealed that there is a significant relationship between sabotage behavior and organizational productivity, there is a significant relationship between theft behavior and organizational productivity, and there is a significant relationship between withdrawal behavior and organizational productivity. Counter productive work behavior can be consequence of personal traits like narcissism and agreeableness dissatisfaction and negative emotions. Besides, unclear job description, employment insecurity, lack of internal career opportunities and inappropriate appraisal system, lack of motivation, abusive supervision, stressful conditions, intent to quit and company contempt, injustice, un-acceptance of peer group, job stress and leader maltreatment are some other stimulus of counter productive work behavior.

Counter productive work behavior can take many forms such as theft, sabotage, verbal abuse, withholding of effort, lying, refusing to cooperate, and physical assault. These occur either at i) interpersonal level or ii) organizational level; at interpersonal level these include behaviors (such as aggression, verbal abuse, favoritism and gossip etc.) that affect employees within the organization. At the organizational level, these refer to the behaviors (absenteeism, misuse of the employer's assets and withdrawal) that affect the organization. Counterproductive work behavior is any intentional behavior on the part of an organization member viewed by the organization as contrary to its legitimate interests. Increase in counterproductive work behavior has been linked to decrease in performance or productivity, employer dissatisfaction, and greater psychological distress. Negative employee behavior is related to behavior of employees with others which in turn may reduce other employee performance and cause conflict.

6. Recommendations

In line with the findings, the following recommendations are made;

1) Organizations should organise regular enlightenment programmes and formulate appropriate HR policies that would help reduce the level of counterproductive work behaviours among employees.

2) Organizations should fulfil their part of the psychological contract.

Workers Counterproductive behavior at workplace has emerged as a major area of concern. Managers should endeavor to limit the effect and pervasiveness of detrimental behaviors.

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