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An insight into counterproductive work behavior

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Abstract

The concept of CWB in recent years has generated high interest among organizational researchers and practitioners because of its pervasiveness in organizations. Organizations want and need employees who will do those things that aren't in any job description. And the evidence indicates that those organizations that have such employees outperform those that don't. Dissatisfied employee is more likely to be motivated to engage in counterproductive work practices such as breaking organizational rules, withholding effort, stealing, taking long breaks and working slowly. These acts should be curtailed as it obstructs the success of the organization. The present paper makes an attempt to discuss counterproductive work practices with reference to pertinent literature.

Keywords: Counterproductive work behavior, organization, dissatisfied employees.

Introduction

Job performance has been an area of investigation in organizational psychology due to its importance to an organization. The world is looking forward to high performance organizations, which would provide high job satisfaction to their employees and would also respect quality and effectiveness. This could be achieved if we could develop organizational citizenship behavior and minimize counterproductive work behavior. There are two areas related to performance in an organization, firstly Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) and secondly Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB).

Objectives of the study

- To get an insight of organizational counterproductive work behavior.
- To suggest measures to minimize organizational counterproductive work behavior.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is stated as set of discretionary workplace behaviors that exceed one's basic job requirements. They are defined as behaviors that go beyond the call of duty. An organization's success very much depends on the performance of its employees, thus good job performance is something organizations try to nurture. There is consensus in this particular field that OCB addresses silent behaviors for organizational enterprises (Barbuto, Brown, Wilhite, & Wheeler, 2001). Efficacious organizations have employees who go beyond their formal job responsibilities and generously give of their time and energy to succeed at the assigned job. Such behavior is neither suggested nor required; yet it contributes to the smooth functioning of the organization. Organizations want and need employees who will do those things that aren't in any job description. And the evidence indicates that those organizations that have such employees outperform those that don't.

Counterproductive Work Behavior

The incidence of employee misconduct and behavioral deviancy in organizational settings and their potentially adverse effects have attracted considerable attention. Diverse terms have been used to refer to such behavior namely, unethical behavior (Jones, 1990), deviant behavior (Robinson & Bennett, 1995), dysfunctional behavior (Griffin *et al.*, 1998), counterproductive behavior (e.g., Fox & Spector, 1999), anti-social behavior (e.g., Robinson *et al.*, 1998), or organizational misbehavior. (Vardi & Wiener, 1996)

CWB refers to the behavior of employees that harms an organization or its members (Spector & Fox, 2002), and it includes acts such as theft, sabotage, verbal abuse, withholding efforts, lying, refusing to cooperate and physical assault (Penney & Spector, 2005).

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CWBs are deviant behaviors that lead to inefficiency and financial costs to the organization (Lanyon & Goldstein, 2004). Mangione and Quinn (1975) suggested that they could be the result of job dissatisfaction, though this was only supported in a limited population. Kelloway, Francis, Prosser, and Cameron (2010) suggested that they occur as a result of dissatisfaction with the organization itself, culminating as a form of protest against the organization through CWBs. Bechtoldt, Welk, Zapf, and Hartig (2007) suggested CWBs occur as a result of the individual's perceptions of his or her job demands, such as whether tasks are viewed as challenging or as hindrances. Research on unethical behavior in organizations has shown that employees may engage in unethical acts in order to benefit themselves, to retaliate against the organization or to harm co-workers (Umphress, *et al.*, 2010).

Dissatisfied employees are more likely to be involved in unethical practices. This includes absenteeism, abusing sick day privileges, abusing drugs and alcohol, filing fake accident claims, sabotaging, breaking organizational rules, withholding effort, stealing, taking long breaks, working slowly, harassing other employees and hiding needed resources.

Measures to Minimize Organizational Counterproductive Work Behavior

Organizational Culture based on Ethics

Organizational Culture should be based on ethics. Ethical core values are established by the management team in order to create a unitary and cohesive organizational structure (Sinclair, 1993). In order to reduce deviant behavior at workplace, organizations must adopt a specific organizational culture (Appelbaum, Iaconi & Matousek, 2007). It is the duty of top management to convey ethical values and norms in order for these norms to trickle down throughout the whole organization (Appelbaum, Deguire & Lay, 2005).

Effective Employees Selection

Background checks, polygraph tests, employment interviews, and honesty tests should be conducted. Conducting frequent background checks while hiring assumes that somebody who has been delinquent in the past will act in the same way in the future and such individuals who have done something wrong in the past will not be given a second chance (Greenberg & Barling, 1996). It is imperative in an organization to stop any type of behavior that would negatively affect it. Psychometric tests being used in personnel recruitment can be written, oral or practical which are able to quantify various types of human behaviour, both normal and deviant. The types of psychometric tests that are most frequently used are aptitude tests, personality questionnaires, and 360-degree questionnaires (Dent & Curd, 2004).

Integrity tests

Integrity tests are pre-employment screening instrument. These tests are conducted to screen out those individuals who have the tendency of counterproductive behavior. There are two main types of integrity tests: overt tests and personality oriented measures. Overt integrity tests typically have two sections, one which measures an individual's attitudes towards theft and one which specifically asks about admissions of theft and other deviant behavior. Personality

oriented measures include theft and broader things such as conscientiousness etc. (Sackett, 1994)

Psychological Contract

Another way of preventing employee deviant behavior at workplace is to maintain psychological contract with the employees help the organization to overcome from CWB. Psychological contract means implicit agreements that employees develop with their employers (Rousseau & McLean Parks, 1993). It is of two types first is transactional and other is relational. Transactional Psychological contracts means less expectations and no trust. Relational psychological contracts means personal long term trust based commitments between the employees and employers (Kidder, & Buchholtz, 2002). Such type of psychological contract, which managers develop with their employees, influences the attitudes and behaviors of their employees. As long as the employees view their employers' trust as reciprocal, the relational psychological contract is likely to lead to high levels of involvement and commitment by employees in organization (Robinson, Kraatz & Rousseau, 1994). So we can say that properly maintained management can encourage the employees to involve themselves in productive behavior.

Conclusion

Negative behaviors such as damage, rumor spreading, theft, gossiping, sexual harassment arriving late at work has negative consequences on employees and also on organization. The effect can be in terms of high in blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, anxiety, demotion and termination. It is essential for an organization to discourage counterproductive behavior occurring in the workplace.

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