

ANTECEDENTS OF COUNTER WORK BEHAVIOR IN PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS: EVIDENCE FROM NIGERIA

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Abstract:

This study attempts to find out some key factors that determine counter work behavior in public sector organizations of Pakistan. Data was collected from 427 lower level employees working in various public sector organizations. Results indicate that insufficient salary, cynical behavior and work family conflict determine counterwork behavior while supervisor support shows a very weak negative relationship. Public sector organizations have to seriously address these issues as they are the root cause of inefficiency in these organizations.

Keywords: Antecedents, Counter Work Behavior, Public Sector Organizations, Asian Perspective

1. Introduction

For decades organizational researchers are focusing on employee behaviors that affect organizational prosperity. In this attempt negative behavior are gaining an increased attention. As Martinko, Gundlach & Douglas(2002) term it as a “proliferation of theoretical explanations for counter- productive workplace behaviors”. Behaviors like absenteeism, turn over have been extensively researched while extreme negative behaviors like sabotage, theft, illegitimate politics have received relatively less attention. These behaviors are intended to hurt organizations or employees (Miles, Borman, Spector, & Fox, 2002). Apart from explaining the phenomena, studies also attempted to find out factors which determine counter work behavior like personality traits (Fox & Spector, 1999; Hepworth & Towler, 2004). Penny (2002) reports a loss of \$200 billions in USA alone associated with CWB. Mangers and decision makers are concerned to reduce frequency and likely hood of these behaviors as it is costly for organizations. While most of these studies were conducted in developed countries, the developing or underdeveloped countries received relatively little attention in this regard.

The cost of CWB in these countries is unknown and so are the factors which contribute towards development of such behaviors. The employees working in the developing or under developed countries are living in much more miserable conditions than the developed countries. The economic conditions and poor salaries definitely increases the likely hood of counter work

behaviors like theft, sabotage etc. These facts necessitate a study which can identify factors causing counter work behavior. Thus we have identified the public sector organizations in Pakistan for analysis regarding counterwork behavior. The findings will help the decision makers and the researchers to explore ways which can reduce counter work behavior in these specific organizational settings.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Counter work behavior

Among the various definitions of counter work behavior, Robinson & Bennet(1995) defined it as behavior which violates organizational norms in some harmful manner. This harm can be for organization in form of any behavior like theft, sabotage, absenteeism etc. and for individual in form of drugs; alcoholism etc. Organizations are increasingly realizing importance of reducing counter work behavior as cost . They are more interested in identification of factors which determine such behaviors. CWB is quite a complex phenomena as Spector & Fox(2002) points that this behavior is normally hidden. Thus we can argue that it is more dangerous for the organizations. "CWB on the other hand is something which can become a worse nightmare for an organization's management, as employees demonstrating such behavior are not non-productive but are counter-productive, because they tend to play a role which altogether reverses the organization's progression"(Bukhari & Ali, 2009).

Researchers have attempted to relate these behaviors with various determinants like organizational justice (Fox, Spector & Miles, 2001) and other factors. Organizations where employees perceive injustice, they are more likely to engage in counter work behaviors. "Organizational justice is a mediator of CWB, as it suggests that individuals who perceived their own workgroup to receive more justice than other units engaged in less counterproductive work behavior" (Flaherty & Moss, 2007). Some researchers have attempted to relate these determinants with types of CWB which are personal and organizational. Fox, Spector & Miles(2001) consider organizational injustice and stressors determine organizational CWB while interpersonal conflict determine personal CWB. Similarly satisfied employees show their commitment towards organization by engaging in behaviors which are beneficial for the organizations rather than engaging in such behaviors which result in counter work behavior. Miles, Borman, Spector, & Fox (2002) relate work environment and emotions with CWB.

There are various components of work environment; organizations must attempt to focus each of these components to reduce incidents of CWB. There has been extensive research on emotions and different studies have established the importance of emotions and their subsequent impact on employee and organizational performance. Thus emotions play an important role in determining CWB in the organizations thus Spector and Fox(2002) consider negative emotions as a potential determinant of CWB. The negative emotions like hopelessness, frustration and disgust are generally referred to as cynicism (Anderson & Bateman, 1997) which can result in non productive behaviors(Storm & Spector, 1987). Mount, Ilies & Jhonson (2006) consider personality as a determinant of CWB. It is important to note that though external factors contribute towards determining CWB, internal factors do play a role in this regard , thus type of personality also contribute towards explaining the phenomena of CWB. Type and level of employment also received attention by researchers some attempted to show which type of

employees is more vulnerable to CWB” Temporary workers had lower job performance and exhibited more counterproductive behaviors”(Posthuma,Campion & Vargas,2005).

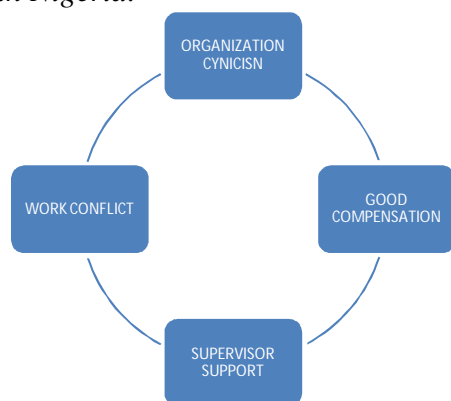
While CWB is one extreme of employee behavior, the other dimension to continuum is Organizational Citizenship behavior (OCB) which is described as “defending organization when it is criticized” (Turnipseed & Rassuli, 2005). Dalal(2005) suggest that these concepts are opposite as one (CWB) is harmful while other(OCB) is beneficial for the organization. Similarly Baker (2005) is of the view that CWB and OCB are negatively correlated. Thus the concept of CWB is important to understand as if organizations are able to reduce or eliminate CWB it will result likelihood of OCB in the organization which is a beneficial for the organizations. These diverse findings indicate that a number of factors need to be considered before analyzing the phenomena of CWB. The determinants of CWB cannot be confined to few determinants rather there is an exhaustive list of factors which determine CWB. However it seems difficult to analyze all factors in one study especially in a country like Pakistan where these behaviors already stand under researched. The factors selected for the present study include compensation, supervisor support, work life conflict and an interesting variable i.e. organizational cynicism. These variables have been identified based on findings of different studies relating these variables with CWB. Based on findings of earlier studies about CWB, the following hypothesis will be tested in the present study:

H1: Organizational cynicism is positively associated with counter work behavior among civil servants in Nigeria.

H2: Good compensation practices are negatively associated with counter work behavior among civil servants in Nigeria.

H3: Supervisor support is negatively associated with counter work behavior among civil servants in Nigeria.

H4: Work life conflict is positively associated with counter work behavior among civil servants in Nigeria.



Source: Researcher’s Field Survey, 2013

3. Methodology/Design

3.1 Questionnaire

The CWB questionnaire was adopted from Bennett and Robinson (2000), Organizational cynicism was measured using a scale developed by Brandes, Dharwadkar& Dean (2000), Pay satisfaction was measured using Heneman and Schwab (1985) Pay Satisfaction Questionnaire,

Supervisor support was measured using a questionnaire developed by Ramus and Steger (2000) while work life conflict was measured through an instrument developed by Pare, Tremblay & Lalonde (2001). The questionnaires were tested for reliability value of each scale showed a satisfactory value. The response was required on five point Likert scale. The questionnaire was accompanied by a short request explaining the importance of the study. It was distributed to HR managers/ administrative officers of different government organizations.

3.2 Population & Sample

The data was collected from employees working in various ministries of the Federal government in Nigeria. The sample included the lower level employees. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed across various ministries within Nigeria, out of which 441 were received back but 427 were valid thus making a response rate as 85%. Following table describes various characteristics of sample:

Table 1 Sample Characteristics

Description	Range	frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	308	70%
	Female	119	28%
Age(years)	20-29	207	48%
	30-39	145	34%
	40-49	55	13%
	50 and above	20	5%
Tenure (Years)	1-9	288	68%
	10-19	103	24%
	20-29	23	5%

Source: Researcher's Field Survey 2014.

The sample composition indicates that majority of respondents were male employees. The percentage of women working in public sector organizations of Nigeria is quite low. There are certain reasons for this low percentage like a very low literacy rate in Nigeria especially for women. As a cultural norm in most rural part of the country women are not allowed to have education while in urban areas the trend is changing. Still the women who get education are mostly restricted to join organizations as traditionally they are supposed to look after home affairs. This makes the percentage of women in the organizations quite low. However women are striving hard to establish their presence in these organizations and now days we can find women working at quite decisive positions in the organizations as well. The other factor considered for data collection is age of respondents. The data was collected mostly from employees having age less than 40 years. Since studies suggest possibility of counter work behavior more in younger employees. Similarly the majority of respondents were having tenure in organizations less than 15 years.

4. Results

Table: 2 Correlation Analysis

Variable	Mean	SD	CWB	Org Cyn	comp	SS	WLC
CWB	3.23	0.53	1.00				
Org Cyn.	2.64	0.68	0.55**	1.00			
Comp.	2.03	0.78	-0.22***	-0.30	1.00		
SS	2.08	0.66	-0.039	0.01	0.09**	1.00	
WLC	2.45	0.68	0.13*	0.10**	-0.06	0.45**	1.00

Source: Researcher's Field Survey 2014

*** $p \leq 0.01$, $n = 427$, SD= Standard Deviation, CWB= Counter Work Behavior, Org Cyn = Organizational Cynicism, SS= Supervisor Support, WLC= Work Life Conflict*

Correlation coefficient matrix indicates a strong and significant relationship between organizational cynicism and counter work behavior in the Nigeria Public sector (0.55**, ** $p \leq 0.01$) while the relationship between compensation and counter work behavior is significantly negative (-0.22**, ** $p \leq 0.01$). Though the relationship between supervisor support and counter work behavior is negative (-0.039) but it is very weak and insignificant. Work life conflict is positively correlated with counter work behavior (0.13*, * $p \leq 0.05$), the possible reasons for which will be explained in discussion.

Table: 3 Regression Analysis

Independent Variable	β	t-Value	Sig
Org Cynicism	0.68	14.75	.000
Compensation	-13.45	-2.82	.005
Supervisor Support	-0.76	-1.67	.078
Work life Conflict	0.12	2.64	0.05

$n = 427$, R Square = 0.334, Adjusted R Square = 0.327, $F = 52.85$, Significance $F = .000$, Dependent Variable = Counter Work Behavior

Regression analysis was used for analyzing various relationships among variables. Value of R square is 0.33, thus the independent variables explain only 33% variation in the dependent variable. The value is quite low probably due to the reason that very few determinants of CWB were selected for the present study. There are number of other factors which affect CWB but the

present study is limited to four factors thus value of R square is relatively low, which can be improved to a significant level if some other variables are added since 67% variation in the dependent variable i.e. CWB remains unexplained. In analysis of variance value of F is significant at 52.85. Regarding individual impact of independent variables on dependent variables the t value of organizational cynicism is significant at 12.75; the t value of compensation is significant at -2.82 while value of supervisor support is insignificant at -1.76. The t value of work life conflict is significant at 2.63.

5. Discussion

The strong relationship between organizational cynicism and CWB indicate that cynicism in any form is a threat for the organizations. The findings are indicative of the fact that employees in public sector are having high level of cynicism for which a number of factors can be attributed to this hopelessness or frustration. During our discussions with public sector employees it was observed that they are highly dissatisfied with their jobs which ultimately resulted cynicism.

The lower level employees face severe discrimination in the organizations. Their opportunities for development are quite low; rewards have no relationship with performance while authority and decision making is totally centralized at top. The working conditions are quite poor. In extreme hot season when temperature rises up 45 centigrade, there are no proper cooling arrangements, the office layout and other facilities are quite poor. Employees are forced to sit in very narrow spaces while senior management in public sector organizations enjoys a luxurious life. Spacious offices with all the facilities and a contingent of personal staff (who are also supposed to work at their homes), rapid career growth, foreign trainings etc. are part of their perks. We believe the major cause of cynicism in public sector employees is this discrimination. Very high rate of absenteeism clearly indicates that CWB is among the most volatile issues in public sector organizations of Nigeria.

Compensation and supervisor support are negatively correlated with CWB in public sector organizations. This relationship indicates that incidents of CWB can be reduced to a large extent if employees are rewarded fairly. The government provides no subsidies thus around 60-70% of this meager income is spent in payment of utilities and transportation. These public servants and their families are living miserable lives. Obviously in these situations we can only expect CWB as an eminent outcome. Supervisor support is negatively related with CWB but the strength of relationship is very weak. The possible reasons for this weak relationship can be attributed to lack of trust in leadership in public sector organizations. The organizations are following a bureaucratic structure with top management enjoying all the privilege and the managers are least concerned about the welfare of lower level employees. The approach of supervisors at any level in these organizations is more production oriented rather than employee oriented.

Employees are not consulted in any decision making rather they are supposed to follow the orders. Thus supervisors have no role to play to reduce counter work behavior in employees. Work life conflict is positively associated with CWB. The increased pressure for downsizing has made life of lower level employees more difficult. Massive layoffs have enhanced the workload on the existing employees. Employees have to do a lot of additional tasks and that too without any additional benefits. The frequent late sittings in the office have badly affected employees work life balance and economic conditions. Most of lower level employees make both ends meet

by doing some additional job after office hours but now these late sittings do not allow them to do any part time job. Another major impact has been on the health of these employees as they cannot afford to buy food if they have to work for late hours or they are forced to buy unhygienic cheaper food from market. Though no such data was available in these organizations we found a number of employees being patients of hepatitis and such diseases caused by having un-hygienic food. The health facilities provided to these employees and their families are very poor. In case any employee or a family member fell ill they have to wait for days to get an appointment from a government doctor and to get the medicine and other treatment. All these factors have made the work life conflict quite severe.

6. Conclusion

The world is changing as so are the public sector organizations around the world but the public sector organizations in Nigeria are still operating following obsolete styles of management having no concern for employees. There is an urgent need on part of decision makers to address this issue and to focus on reducing counter work behaviors among employees. Traditional control system can force them to work in offices but it cannot restrict them from exhibiting counter work behaviors. This can only be done if employee behaviors are controlled through consideration and employee orientation otherwise the CWB will remain an integral part of public sector organizations of Nigeria.

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