

EXAMINING COUNTERPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIORS IN PUBLIC SERVICE AGENCIES: IMPACTS ON ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND PUBLIC TRUST

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Abstract. *Counterproductive behaviors in public service agencies, such as violence, misuse of time and resources, and property misuse, pose significant challenges to organizational effectiveness and employee morale. These detrimental actions often arise from perceptions of organizational politics, role ambiguity, and insufficient governance frameworks. Tools like the Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist can be instrumental in identifying and measuring these behaviors, which are marked by their intentionality and negative impact. Individual traits along with the work environment—especially leader-member relationships—play a crucial role in the prevalence of such behaviors. These behaviors, including lack of motivation and poor communication, obstruct the achievement of organizational goals and disrupt team dynamics. To effectively address these issues, a comprehensive approach is necessary, which includes clearer job definitions and the cultivation of supportive workplace cultures aimed at enhancing overall agency performance. Organizations can combat counterproductive behaviors by implementing strategies such as regular background checks, promoting psychological empowerment, and aligning organizational norms with ethical values. Additionally, prioritizing employee well-being and fostering a supportive culture through training and development programs can help mitigate these behaviors, boost employee morale, and restore public trust in service agencies. High-quality HR practices and effective leadership are essential in reducing counterproductive work behaviors by promoting fairness and nurturing strong relationships among employees.*

Keywords: *analysis, behavior, counterproductive behavior, work, public service agencies, organizational effectiveness, public trust*

Introduction.

In recent years, the efficiency and integrity of public service agencies have come under scrutiny, particularly due to the emergence of counterproductive behaviors that undermine organizational effectiveness and erode public trust. Counterproductive behaviors, which encompass a range of detrimental actions such as absenteeism, workplace incivility, and non-compliance with regulations, pose a significant challenge to the operational integrity of public institutions. Identifying and measuring these behaviors is crucial, as they often manifest in subtle yet impactful ways that can disrupt the workplace environment and hinder the achievement of organizational goals. Factors contributing to these behaviors are multifaceted, encompassing organizational dynamics, individual characteristics, and the broader work environment, all of which interplay to create a fertile ground for such actions. Moreover, the implications of counterproductive behaviors extend beyond the confines of individual agencies; they significantly influence public perception, leading to a decline in trust and confidence among the citizenry. This research aims to explore the intricate relationship between counterproductive behaviors and their effects on both organizational effectiveness and

public trust, while also examining potential strategies for mitigating these behaviors through policy implementation, training initiatives, and effective leadership. By addressing these critical issues, the study seeks to contribute to a more holistic understanding of how public service agencies can enhance their operational performance and restore public confidence in their mission and services.

Main text

Counterproductive behaviors within public service agencies manifest in a variety of forms, significantly impacting the efficacy and morale of these organizations. Among the most serious is violence, which can be directed against passengers or other crew members, leading to unsafe environments and undermining the core mission of providing reliable public services [1]. Another prevalent issue is the misuse of time and resources, which includes activities such as engaging with gadgets during work hours. This behavior not only distracts employees from their duties but also diverts critical resources away from essential tasks, thereby diminishing overall productivity. Additionally, property misuse is a frequent concern, where employees may use agency equipment for personal purposes, further straining the resources necessary for effective service delivery. Violations of service standards and rules also feature prominently as counterproductive behaviors, potentially leading to decreased public trust and dissatisfaction among service users. Addressing these behaviors requires a comprehensive approach that includes stricter enforcement of rules, effective training programs to foster a culture of accountability, and the implementation of monitoring systems to detect and mitigate such behaviors promptly.

To effectively identify and measure behaviors within an organization, it is essential to first understand the categorization of these behaviors and their respective impacts. A prevalent method for this is the use of tools like the 45-item Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB) Checklist, which delineates behaviors directed toward both organizations and individuals [2]. This tool not only helps distinguish between interpersonal and organizational counterproductive behaviors but also facilitates the identification of underlying demographic variables that might explain these behaviors [3]. Furthermore, research emphasizes the importance of incorporating individual differences into these measurements, which can be instrumental in predicting behavioral tendencies that may lead to significant costs for organizations and societies. As such, the integration of individual demographic variables and targeted scales helps in tailoring interventions aimed at reducing such behaviors [4]. By adopting a multifaceted approach that includes both individual and organizational perspectives, organizations can develop a comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to counterproductive behaviors, thereby enabling more effective management strategies.

Counterproductive work behaviors (CWB) are distinct from other organizational issues due to their intentionality and the specific harm they cause to both the organization and its stakeholders [5]. These behaviors encompass a range of negative actions, such as abuse, production deviance, sabotage, theft, and withdrawal, which stand in stark contrast to other non-intentional organizational challenges. CWB is often a reflection of an employee's response to perceived failures in the organizational environment, suggesting a complex interplay between individual perceptions and

organizational culture. This is further supported by the Social Exchange Theory, which posits that when employees perceive unfairness or a lack of appropriate workplace conditions, they may feel justified in retaliating through deviant behaviors [1]. The impacts of CWB are multifaceted, not only affecting the immediate victims through a depletion of personal and work resources but also leading to broader organizational consequences such as unfair resource allocation and stunted career growth opportunities [4]. Addressing CWB requires a nuanced understanding of the organizational environment and a commitment to fostering a positive climate that mitigates these behaviors by ensuring fairness and resource availability to all employees.

The emergence of counterproductive behaviors within organizations is intricately linked to organizational factors that create an environment conducive to such actions. A significant contributor to this phenomenon is the perception of organizational politics, which mediates the relationship between various organizational factors such as participation in decision making, role conflict, and role ambiguity, and the resulting counterproductive behaviors. Employees often perceive organizational politics as a mechanism to form coalitions and protect personal interests, which can lead to behaviors that undermine organizational goals. Furthermore, the ambiguity in task requirements and subjective organizational rules provides employees with opportunities to engage in activities detrimental to the organization's well-being. These factors collectively foster an environment where counterproductive behaviors can thrive, highlighting the need for organizations to address these underlying issues through clearer job definitions, transparent decision-making processes, and minimized perceptions of politics to mitigate the risks associated with such behaviors.

Individual characteristics significantly influence the likelihood of engaging in certain behaviors, particularly in organizational contexts. For instance, personality traits, such as those encompassed by the Dark Triad—narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy—are considered dispositional antecedents that can predispose individuals to engage in unethical behaviors within organizations. However, it is crucial to recognize that these behaviors cannot be wholly attributed to personality traits alone; situational factors and organizational contexts also play a pivotal role [1]. For example, individuals may be more inclined to engage in counterproductive work behaviors (CWB) or organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) depending on the alignment between their traits and the organizational environment. This alignment suggests that organizations that suit an individual's characteristics might mitigate the propensity for such behaviors, highlighting the need for strategic human resource practices that consider trait-environment fit. Consequently, interventions focusing on both individual traits and organizational contexts are essential to effectively manage and reduce the occurrence of unethical or counterproductive behaviors.

The work environment plays a pivotal role in either fostering or mitigating counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs) among employees, significantly influenced by factors like workplace ostracism and organizational cynicism. A negative work environment characterized by ostracism can foster counterproductive behaviors, as employees who feel excluded tend to develop cynical attitudes toward their organization, which can lead to actions that interfere with organizational progress and

benefits. This relationship is mediated by organizational cynicism, which acts as a bridge between the experience of ostracism and the manifestation of counterproductive behaviors [2]. Furthermore, the quality of the leader-member exchange (LMX) relationship is crucial in this context, as a high-quality relationship can mitigate the negative effects of envy and ostracism, reducing the likelihood of CWBs. Conversely, low-quality leader-subordinate relationships can exacerbate feelings of envy and helplessness, pushing employees toward counterproductive actions as a misguided means to address their frustrations. Therefore, fostering a supportive work environment with strong leader-member relationships and addressing workplace ostracism can be effective strategies for mitigating CWBs and promoting a more productive and harmonious workplace.

Counterproductive behaviors within public service agencies can significantly undermine their overall performance, primarily due to ambiguous organizational structures and inadequate governance frameworks. The absence of clear job descriptions and subjective organizational rules can lead employees to focus on personal or group interests rather than organizational goals. This lack of clarity fosters an environment where employees might engage in unproductive activities, as they are not adequately guided by precise roles or responsibilities. Furthermore, the perception of organizational politics, such as unionization and coalition forming, can encourage self-serving behavior that diverges from the agency's objectives. These behaviors are often exacerbated by the weak administrative systems prevalent in public organizations, which can cultivate a political culture conducive to such activities. Consequently, there's an urgent need for public service agencies to implement stringent performance measurement and incentive systems, alongside clear job descriptions to mitigate these behaviors and enhance overall agency performance [8].

In exploring the effects of deviant behaviors on organizational effectiveness, it is crucial to assess both short-term and long-term impacts. In the short term, negative deviant behaviors, such as employee theft, can severely undermine organizational performance. This highlights the immediate need for organizations to implement strategies such as frequent background checks to mitigate the infiltration and effects of deviant employees. However, the long-term implications extend beyond immediate financial losses. Strict adherence to organizational norms can inadvertently stifle positive deviant behaviors that could otherwise foster innovation and long-term benefits. To counteract these negative trends, organizations may focus on remodeling their norms and values to align with an ethical core culture, thereby enhancing survival and sustainability even in the face of deviance. Furthermore, promoting psychological empowerment among employees has been identified as a potent strategy for enabling positive deviance. This empowerment not only supports individual growth but also contributes to enhanced organizational effectiveness over time. Therefore, it is imperative for organizations to strike a balance between maintaining necessary norms to prevent negative deviance while fostering an environment that encourages positive deviance and psychological empowerment for long-term success.

Counterproductive job habits, such as lack of motivation, poor communication, and inefficiency, substantially undermine a firm's performance, thereby hindering the achievement of organizational goals and objectives. These behaviors can create a ripple

effect that not only affects individual productivity but also disrupts team dynamics, leading to wider organizational inefficiencies. This lack of access to comprehensive data and insights prevents organizations from implementing evidence-based strategies that could mitigate counterproductive behaviors. Furthermore, as the study contributes to the literature on human resource management, corporate management, and business strategy, it highlights that a deeper understanding of these areas is essential to overcoming such behavioral challenges and enhancing the achievement of organizational objectives. Therefore, it is imperative for organizations to invest in research and development to better understand these dynamics and to develop effective interventions to foster a culture of productivity and strategic alignment.

Public perception of public service agencies is a multifaceted issue that hinges on a variety of factors, including both positive practices and criticisms. On the positive side, the affectionate attitude towards employees in public organizations enhances their image, as it fosters a supportive and inclusive work environment that the public perceives favorably [1]. Additionally, the structured and standardized approach to human resource management in the public sector is generally seen in a positive light, contributing to a reliable and consistent public service image. However, this positive perception can be easily undermined by criticisms regarding the productivity, performance, and accountability of these agencies, which can lead to public skepticism and distrust. Furthermore, while rule-breaking with positive or prosocial intentions, known as PSRB, can sometimes lead to public admiration for frontline workers who go above and beyond to serve stakeholders, it also introduces a layer of complexity by inviting scrutiny and criticism of the agency's adherence to established norms [2]. This duality highlights the delicate balance public service agencies must maintain in addressing both internal and external expectations to uphold a favorable public perception. Therefore, it is essential for public service agencies to actively engage in transparent communications and demonstrate accountability to mitigate criticisms and reinforce public trust.

Counterproductive behaviors play a significant role in the erosion of public trust, with various factors influencing the degree to which trust is affected. One critical aspect is the individual's response to trust violations; trustors who exhibit a forgiving nature are less likely to experience a significant loss of trust following a violation [5]. This suggests that personal characteristics and perceptions can mitigate the negative impacts of counterproductive actions. Furthermore, the trustee's proactive engagement in trust repair behaviors is vital in minimizing trust erosion. Actions such as providing thorough explanations, offering sincere apologies, and implementing effective remedies have been shown to significantly reduce trust damage. These trust repair efforts are essential because trust erosion is not necessarily linked to the severity of the counterproductive behavior. Instead, trust can degrade independently of the level of damage caused, underscoring that the perception of trust violations, rather than their actual consequences, often drives the erosion process. However, trust violations are frequently perceived as indicators of potential future breaches, which can perpetuate a cycle of mistrust unless adequately addressed. Therefore, to preserve and restore public trust, it is imperative for trustees to engage in consistent and transparent trust repair strategies, focusing not only on remedying specific incidents but also on fostering a

broader environment of reliability and accountability.

To effectively address the decline in trust resulting from counterproductive behaviors, agencies must consider the multifaceted nature of organizational dynamics. One critical approach is to address value differences between employee subcultures, which is essential for fostering trust within the organization [6]. By bridging the gap between diverse employee groups, agencies can create a more harmonious workplace, where trust is built on mutual understanding and shared objectives. Moreover, while adhering to organizational norms is important, it is equally vital to allow space for positive deviant behaviors that encourage innovation and adaptability. This can be achieved through fostering employee psychological empowerment, allowing individuals the autonomy to make decisions that benefit the organization as a whole. Additionally, organizations can take proactive measures by remodeling their norms, attitudes, and social values to create a culture deeply rooted in ethical core values. This cultural transformation not only aligns employee behaviors with organizational goals but also serves as a preventive mechanism against counterproductive actions. Finally, implementing more frequent background checks during the hiring process can serve as a safeguard, ensuring that new hires align with the organization's ethical standards and reducing the likelihood of counterproductive behavior from the outset. Collectively, these strategies highlight a comprehensive approach to rebuilding trust and fostering a positive and productive organizational environment.

To effectively mitigate counterproductive work behaviors (CWB) within public organizations, it is essential to implement a multifaceted approach that addresses various root causes. First, organizations should prioritize the development of leadership programs that equip leaders with the skills necessary to manage employee emotions, particularly in moderating the negative effects of emotions such as envy [7]. By fostering environments where envy is minimized, organizations can prevent the escalation of toxic behaviors that often result from unmanaged workplace emotions. Moreover, focusing on the well-being of employees alongside organizational goals is crucial, especially in the public sector where the alignment of individual and organizational objectives can reduce instances of CWB. This balance can be achieved through policies that prioritize human resource practices, ensuring that during financial crises, support and development take precedence over profit-centered strategies. By implementing these comprehensive policies, public organizations can create healthier work environments that deter counterproductive behaviors, thereby promoting both employee satisfaction and organizational efficiency.

Summary and conclusions

So, training and development programs serve as pivotal tools in mitigating counterproductive work behaviors by enhancing employees' connections to their organizations. By focusing on organizational identification, these programs can cultivate a stronger sense of belonging among employees, thereby reducing tendencies toward behaviors that are detrimental to the workplace. Furthermore, such programs can directly address perceptions of unfair treatment, a common catalyst for workplace disengagement and discontent. Through targeted training initiatives, organizations can improve employee morale and loyalty, which significantly decreases the occurrence of counterproductive behaviors. Additionally, fostering a supportive culture that values

employee development is crucial. By doing so, organizations not only create an environment where employees feel valued and supported but also lessen the likelihood of disengagement due to perceived unfairness. High-quality, discretionary HR practices that prioritize professional growth can also play a significant role in this context. These practices help mitigate the adverse effects of unfair organizational treatment, effectively curbing negative behaviors that stem from such perceptions. Overall, by integrating training and development programs that emphasize growth opportunities and fair treatment, organizations can build a more engaged and productive workforce.

At the same time, leadership plays a pivotal role in managing and reducing counterproductive work behaviors (CWB) through various mechanisms that hinge on the quality of leader-member interactions. The leader's ability to effectively communicate and build relationships with subordinates is essential for fostering a productive work environment. This is particularly evident in the concept of leader-member exchange (LMX), where the quality of the relationship between leaders and their subordinates can significantly impact workplace behaviors. High-quality LMX relationships are associated with reduced occurrences of CWB, as they promote a sense of fairness and inclusion among employees. Conversely, when leaders demonstrate inconsistent behavior or differential treatment, it can exacerbate feelings of inequality and lead to increased CWB. Such differential treatment often arises from leaders categorizing employees into "in-groups" and "out-groups," which can further deepen perceptions of disparity among employees. Therefore, to effectively manage and reduce CWB, leaders must ensure equitable treatment and foster strong, positive relationships with all subordinates. Emphasizing the importance of consistent and fair interactions can mitigate the negative impacts of CWB, ultimately leading to a more harmonious and efficient organizational environment.

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