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"Ovidius" University
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Counterproductive Work Behavior and Job Satisfaction

Dumitrescu Diana-Cosmina¹, Meca Florina Margareta², Croitoru Oana³, Tănase Tase⁴

¹Independent Researcher, Romania; Ovidius University in Constanta, Faculty of Law and Administrative Sciences, Romania

cosmina_dd@yahoo.com¹, mecaflorinam@gmail.com², croitoruoana0@yahoo.com³, tanase.tasente@365.univ-ovidius.ro⁴

Abstract. In today's highly competitive environment, organizations need to identify and understand the factors that influence employees and their work outcomes, which in turn have consequences for the organization. The present research focused on analyzing the relationships between counterproductive work behaviors (abuse, production deviance, sabotage, theft, withdrawal) and levels of job satisfaction (intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction) in a sample of 79 participants. Results indicate a significantly negative relationship between extrinsic satisfaction and counterproductive behaviors in total. A significant negative correlation was also observed between job satisfaction and theft behavior. Extrinsic satisfaction also showed a significantly negative correlation with theft and abuse behavior. Contrary to initial hypotheses, the research refuted the significantly negative relationship between job satisfaction and counterproductive behaviors in total, as well as between intrinsic satisfaction and these behaviors. These results suggest that, in this sample, job satisfaction and counterproductive behaviors did not show a direct correlation as originally expected. This research provides an important insight into the complexity of workplace relationships and highlights the need for further research to understand more deeply the influences of psychological variables on workplace behavior.

Keywords: behavior, Contraproduative, satisfaction



1. Theoretical framework

1.1. Counterproductive work behaviors

Counterproductive Work Behaviors (CWB) differ from behaviors normally associated with a work task and are defined as intentional actions designed to harm the organization (CWB-O) or other people (CWB-P) such as its members, customers or beneficiaries. These include behaviors such as destroying organizational property, intentionally performing work incorrectly or taking unauthorized breaks. Also, abusive behaviors directed at others, physical and verbal aggression, hitting a co-worker, insulting or yelling at someone, stealing, absenteeism, or tardiness at work fall into the palette of counterproductive workplace behaviors (Spector & Fox, 2005; Spector & Fox, 2010; Ying & Cohen, 2018). Given that most CWB usually occur when there are no witnesses, their main form of assessment is self-assessment. Alongside this, peer reports or indicators retrieved from organizational records are also common (Fox et al., 2007; Ilie et al., 2012; Ispas & Borman, 2015). According to Spector and colleagues (2006), CWB can be divided into five distinct categories. These include abuse of others, withdrawal from job responsibilities, sabotage (such as damaging organizational property), theft or disruption of production (such as working at a slower pace, neglecting work procedures, or making deliberate errors). Abuse of others refers to behavior that is hurtful to colleagues, causing physical or psychological harm through threats, nasty comments, ignoring or undermining a person's ability to work. Withdrawal from work responsibilities involves reducing working time and may include actions such as taking longer breaks than allowed, being late starting work, leaving work early or even being absent from work. This behavior reflects an attempt to avoid stressors or situations considered unfair. As for sabotage and damage to production, these behaviors are considered more subtle and less visible than direct destruction of property. They are therefore more difficult to prove and sanction. Sabotage may also have social purposes, such as attracting attention, gaining acceptance in groups, or gaining a competitive advantage. Regarding theft, although it is seen as a counterproductive behavior in the workplace, the reasons behind it are often considered to be instrumental rather than hostile, including excessive drug or alcohol use, financial opportunities, or criminal history (Krischer et al., 2010; Mustaine & Tewksbury, 2002; Spector et al., 2006).

1.2. Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction has a direct impact on employee performance and consequently on organizational outcomes. According to Herzberg et al. (1959) there are two types of factors that are correlated with job satisfaction, their presence or absence leading either to performance and increased job satisfaction or to reducing job dissatisfaction. Thus, we have motivational factors that are intrinsically motivating, including appreciation, recognition, responsibility, and hygienic factors that are extrinsically motivating, including organizational policies, working conditions, salary level or relationships with colleagues. Therefore, for the organization to have a productive workforce, employees need to be motivated by providing support, appreciation and guidance at work and by having clear procedures and rules regarding advancement opportunities within the organization. And to prevent lack of job satisfaction or low job satisfaction, more attention needs to be paid to micro and macro management, chaotic situations, and dissatisfaction within the organization and to providing fair treatment of employees by ensuring an optimal work



environment and optimal remuneration Goetz et al., 2012; Herzberg et al., 1959; Ikurayeke et al., 2019; King, 1970).

1.3. Literature Review

Counterproductive Work Behaviors are characterized by the presence of hostility to authority, impulsiveness and lack of moral integrity. Because of their frustration, people think they are being treated unfairly and therefore they act accordingly. These behaviors are intentional and are at odds with the interests of organizations (Furnham & Taylor, 2004), which although they serve the immediate interests of the employee who exhibits them, in the long run they affect the organization and implicitly the interests of the employee (Mikulay et al., 2001). Job satisfaction has therefore frequently been associated with different individual and organizational outcomes and conditions at work (Dormann & Zapf, 2001) such as the intention to leave the job (Ravenswood et al., 2018), stress and well-being (Malek et al., 2010), organizational culture (Berson, Oreg & Dvir, 2008), burnout, self-esteem, depression and anxiety (Faragher, 2005), reward system, fraudulent behavior (Ikurayeke et al., 2019), theft (Shapiro et al., 1995), sabotage, production-related deviance, gossip or rumor spreading (Mangione & Quinn, 1975). Results from Mangione & Quinn (1975) and Judge et al., (2006), suggest that there is a significant negative correlation between job satisfaction and counterproductive behaviors, particularly in male respondents in the 30+ age group. Also, Fatima et al, (2012) suggest that job dissatisfaction leads to unfavorable attitudes and actions, including high staff turnover, increased absenteeism, decreased commitment and reduced productivity. A meta-analysis published by Dormann & Zapf in 2001 confirms significant correlations between job satisfaction and counterproductive work behaviors such as absenteeism or sabotage. The study conducted by Ikurayeke et al., (2019) on a sample of 205 employees from several stores in Nigeria indicated a significant correlation between an inadequate reward system with theft, fraud and embezzlement from the workplace, results being in line with those obtained by Hollinger (1983) in his study on a sample of 9175 respondents chosen from several organizational sectors in Minneapolis and Dallas, USA, such as hospitals, stores or manufacturing firms. It also suggests that workplace theft is correlated with wage levels. On the other hand, results from Shapiro et al. (1995) suggest that job dissatisfaction does not influence theft. This result may be due to additional variables introduced in the research, such as attitudes towards theft reduction programs implemented by management. Regarding intrinsic motivation, according to Abubakar et al. (2022) this acts as a mediator for deviant behaviors at work, in the sense that when the organization provides sufficient intrinsic motivation to employees, they are less likely to engage in deviant behaviors. Thus, Centers & Bugental (1966) who conducted research on a sample of 692 respondents showed that intrinsic motivation is prevalent among employees in positions requiring higher qualifications while extrinsic motivation predominates for employees performing work requiring at most secondary education. A 2013 survey of 400 respondents indicates that employees in high-skilled positions are less likely to engage in counterproductive behaviors at work than employees who perform predominantly manual work. Also, among this group of employees the most common counterproductive work behavior was abuse directed at others, followed by theft, sabotage, impairment of production, and withdrawal (Anjum & Parvez, 2013).



2. Methodology

2.1. Research objectives and hypotheses

The objectives of this study are to observe both the correlations between counterproductive work behaviors (abuse, production deviance, sabotage, theft, withdrawal) and job satisfaction (intrinsic satisfaction respectively extrinsic satisfaction) in total as well as between their dimensions. Thus, we will have the following research hypotheses:

1. There is a significant negative correlation between job satisfaction and counterproductive work behavior (total).
2. There is a significant negative correlation between intrinsic satisfaction and counterproductive work behavior (total).
3. There is a significant negative correlation between extrinsic satisfaction and counterproductive work behavior (total).
4. There is a significant negative correlation between job satisfaction and theft.
5. There is a significant negative correlation between extrinsic satisfaction and theft.
6. There is a significant negative correlation between extrinsic satisfaction and abuse.

2.2. Participants

The design of this research is a cross-sectional, non-experimental study conducted on a representative sample of 79 participants, aged 18 to 65 years old, with a mean age of 37.51 years ($M=37.51$; $SD=10.003$) (see Appendices, Table 1), randomly selected from across the country. In terms of gender 16.5% were male (13 persons) and 83.5% were female (66 persons) and in terms of residence 84.8% (67 persons) were from urban areas and 15.2% (12 persons) from rural areas (see Appendices, Table 2).

2.3. Survey Instruments

2.3.1 Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (CWB-C) 32-item version

To measure the counterproductive work behaviors, we used Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (CWB-C) 32-item version (Spector et al., 2006), translated from English into Romanian. This scale comprises a number of 32 items organized in 5 dimensions: abuse, production-related deviance, sabotage, theft and withdrawal and the scoring is done on a 5-point Likert scale. The respondents have to choose for each item the answer that fits them best ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 = Never 2 = Once or twice a year 3 = Once or twice a month 4 = Once or twice a week 5 = Daily. The Abuse dimension is indicated by the response to items 8, 9, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 23, 32, the Production-related deviance dimension is indicated by the response to items 2, 10, 12, the Sabotage dimension is indicated by the response to items 1, 5, 6, the Theft dimension is indicated by the response to items 7, 16, 17, 18, 22 and the Withdrawal dimension by the response to items 3, 4, 11, 13. The scale is summative, does not contain reversed items and all items are summed up in order to calculate the total score. In the present study the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is .898.

2.3.2 Job Satisfaction Scale

To measure job satisfaction, we used the Job Satisfaction Scale (Warr et al., 1979), translated from English to Romanian. The scale includes a number of 15 items organized in 2



dimensions, Intrinsic Workplace Satisfaction and Extrinsic Workplace Satisfaction and the scoring is done on a 7-point Likert scale. The respondents have to choose for each item the answer that fits them best ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 - I am extremely dissatisfied, and 7 - I am extremely satisfied. The Intrinsic Workplace Satisfaction dimension is indicated by the answer to items 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 and the Extrinsic Workplace Satisfaction dimension is indicated by the answer to items 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13. The scale is summative, it does not contain reversed items and following the scoring it can be obtained a general index of Workplace Satisfaction or separate indices for each dimension. In the current study, the Alpha Cronbach coefficient is .927.

2.3.3 Job satisfaction - Subscale from Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire

To measure job satisfaction, we also used the Job satisfaction - Subscale from Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Tepper, 2000), translated from English to Romanian. The scale includes 3 items, one of which is reversed, and the scoring is done on a 7-point Likert scale where: 1 = Strongly Disagree and 7 = Strongly Agree. The scores obtained for the items are then summed. In the current study, the Alpha Cronbach coefficient is .531. The Alpha Cronbach coefficient for this study, for both scales that measure total satisfaction is .919.

2.4. Research design and procedure

The design of this research is empirical, cross-sectional and non-experimental and it was carried out on a convenience respondent group of 79 participants randomly chosen, online, from the general population. The questionnaire was self-administered and included the above-mentioned scales as well as demographic information regarding gender, age, education level, marital, relational, professional status, residence and work environment. The survey was applied with the help of Google Forms, being shared on social networks (Facebook, Whatsapp). To obtain the most honest answers, the respondents were informed about the anonymous and confidential nature of the research. Following completion of the questionnaire with the number of respondents necessary to carry out the research, it was closed, and it started the stage of processing the obtained data, analyzing the results and interpreting them. For this purpose, we used the statistical program SPSS 25. The conclusions were drawn at the end.

3. Data analysis and interpretation

3.1. Data analysis

Before testing the hypotheses, a primary processing of the collected data was necessary. We performed a descriptive statistical analysis of the collected data, this analysis involving indicators of central tendency, scatter, and the shape of the data distribution; the coefficient of skewness and kurtosis for the variables: job satisfaction, respectively its dimensions: intrinsic satisfaction and extrinsic satisfaction and counterproductive work behaviors, as well as their dimensions: abuse, production-related deviance, sabotage, theft and withdrawal.

Furthermore, based on the Skewness and Kurtosis coefficients, we checked the normality condition for each variable involved in the analysis. Thus, the skewness indicator of asymmetry for the workplace satisfaction variable has a value of -1.328 and a kurtosis index of 1.390. This



variable is nonparametrically distributed, because the skewness index does not have a value between -1 and +1, and the kurtosis index is between -3 and +3. The mean of the variable is 98.1266 and the standard deviation is 15.96901. The intrinsic satisfaction variable has the asymmetry indicator of -1.670, and the kurtosis index of 2.842, being nonparametrically distributed. The mean of the variable is 32.5570, and the standard deviation is 6.72490. The extrinsic satisfaction variable has the asymmetry indicator of -1.142, and the kurtosis index of .849, being nonparametrically distributed. The mean of the variable is 37.4810, and the standard deviation is 6.89827.

The abuse variable has an asymmetry indicator of 1.643, and a kurtosis index of 3.284, being nonparametrically distributed. The mean of the variable is 11.3165, and the standard deviation is 2.97228. The production-related deviance variable has a skewness index of 2.435 and a kurtosis index of 7.266, which means it is nonparametrically distributed. The mean of the variable is 3.7848, and the standard deviation is 1.29764. The sabotage variable has an asymmetry indicator of 3.396, and a kurtosis index of 12.416, being nonparametrically distributed. The mean of the variable is 3.3038, and the standard deviation is .79024. The theft variable has an asymmetry indicator of 6.433, and a kurtosis index of 48.146, being nonparametrically distributed. The mean of the variable is 5.5443, and the standard deviation is 1.73055. The withdrawal variable has a skewness indicator of 1.426 and a kurtosis index of 1.666, being nonparametrically distributed.

The mean of the variable is 6.7722, and the standard deviation is 2.83725. The variable counterproductive work behavior (total) has the asymmetry indicator of 3.048, and the kurtosis index of 14.869, being nonparametrically distributed. The mean of the variable is 39.4937, and the standard deviation is 8.87646 (see Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive analysis

	Statistic	M	SD	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	<i>N</i>	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>
Workplace satisfaction	79	98.1266	15.96901	-1.328	.271	1.390	.535
Intrinsic satisfaction	79	32.5570	6.72490	-1.670	.271	2.842	.535
Extrinsic satisfaction	79	37.4810	6.89827	-1.142	.271	.849	.535
Abuse	79	11.3165	2.97228	1.643	.271	3.283	.535
Production-related deviance	79	3.7848	1.29764	2.435	.271	7.266	.535
Sabotage	79	3.3038	.79024	3.396	.271	12.416	.535
Theft	79	5.5443	1.73055	6.433	.271	48.146	.535
Withdrawal	79	6.7722	2.83725	1.426	.271	1.666	.535
CWB	79	39.4937	8.87646	3.048	.271	14.869	.535

3.2. Hypothesis testing

To test the first hypothesis: *1. There is a significant negative correlation between job satisfaction and counterproductive work behavior (total)*, we performed a bivariate correlation analysis, the Spearman correlation for nonparametric data, between job satisfaction and



counterproductive work behavior (total) using SPSS 25. It is observed that there is no significant correlation between job satisfaction and counterproductive behaviors ($r=-.204$, $p=.072$). Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected (see Table 2).

To test the second hypothesis: 2. *There is a significant negative correlation between intrinsic satisfaction and counterproductive work behavior (total)*, we performed a bivariate correlational analysis, the Spearman correlation for nonparametric data, between intrinsic satisfaction and counterproductive work behaviors (total) using SPSS 25. It is observed that there is no significant correlation between intrinsic satisfaction and counterproductive work behaviors ($r=-.168$, $p=.139$). Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected (see Table 2).

To test the third hypothesis: 3. *There is a significant negative correlation between extrinsic satisfaction and counterproductive work behavior (total)*, we performed a bivariate correlation analysis, the Spearman correlation for nonparametric data, between extrinsic satisfaction and counterproductive work behaviors (total) using SPSS 25.

It is observed that between extrinsic satisfaction and counterproductive work behavior (total) there is a statistically significant negative correlation ($r=-.255$, $p<.05=.024$). From this analysis, it results that when extrinsic satisfaction is low, counterproductive behaviors are increased. Therefore, the hypothesis is confirmed (see Table 2).

Test the fourth hypothesis: 4. *There is a significant negative correlation between job satisfaction and theft*, we performed a bivariate correlation analysis, the Spearman correlation for nonparametric data, between job satisfaction and theft using SPSS 25. It is observed that between job satisfaction and theft there is a statistically significant negative relationship ($r=-.107$, $p<.05=.044$). From this analysis, it results that when job satisfaction is low, theft is increased. Therefore, the hypothesis is confirmed (see Table 2).

To test the fifth hypothesis: 5. *There is a significant negative relationship between extrinsic satisfaction and theft* we performed a bivariate correlational analysis, the Spearman correlation for nonparametric data, between extrinsic satisfaction and theft using SPSS 25. It is observed that between extrinsic satisfaction and theft there is a statistically significant negative correlation ($r=-.302$, $p<.05=.007$). From this analysis, it results that when extrinsic satisfaction is low, theft is increased. Therefore, the hypothesis is confirmed (see Table 2).

To test the sixth hypothesis: 6. *There is a significant negative correlation between extrinsic satisfaction and abuse*, we performed a bivariate correlational analysis, Spearman's correlation for nonparametric data, between extrinsic satisfaction and abuse using SPSS 25.

It is observed that between extrinsic satisfaction and abuse there is a statistically significant negative correlation ($r=-.240$, $p<.05=.033$). From this analysis, it results that when extrinsic satisfaction is low, abuse is high. Therefore, the hypothesis is confirmed (see Table 2).



Table 2. Spearman correlations between variables

	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Workplace satisfaction	79	98.1266	15.96901	-					
2. CWB	79	39.4937	8.87646	-.204	-				
3. Extrinsic satisfaction	79	37.4810	6.89827	.901**	-.255*	-			
4. Intrinsic satisfaction	79	32.5570	6.72490	.920**	-.168	.800**	-		
5. Abuse	79	11.3165	2.97228	-.177	.808**	-.240*	-.156	-	
6. Theft	79	5.5443	1.73055	-.227*	.545**	-.302*	-.193	.232*	-

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.001$

3.3. Interpretation of results

Following our study, four of the six proposed hypotheses were confirmed, respectively hypothesis no. 3. *There is a significant negative correlation between extrinsic satisfaction and counterproductive work behavior (total)*, hypothesis no. 4. *There is a significant negative correlation between job satisfaction and theft*, hypothesis no. 5. *There is a significant negative correlation between extrinsic satisfaction and theft* and hypothesis no. 6. *There is a significant negative relationship between extrinsic satisfaction and abuse*. The results are in line with specialized literature (Anjum & Parvez, 2013; Fatima et al., 2012; Ikurayeke et al., 2019; Judge et al., 2006; Mangione & Quinn, 1975). This can be explained by referring to Herzberg's theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) according to which the lack or limited presence of extrinsic motivating factors such as salary, extra-salary benefits or working conditions contribute to the production and exacerbation of counterproductive behaviors at work. Thus, the results obtained in our study regarding the significant negative correlation between extrinsic satisfaction and counterproductive work behaviors, job satisfaction and theft, extrinsic satisfaction, and theft as well as extrinsic satisfaction and abuse suggest that a low level of job satisfaction generated by extrinsic or intrinsic factors leads to engaging in counterproductive behaviors at work. Regarding the two hypotheses that were rejected, respectively hypothesis no. 1 *There is a significant negative correlation between job satisfaction and counterproductive work behavior (total)*, respectively hypothesis no. 2 *There is a significant negative relationship between intrinsic satisfaction and counterproductive work behavior (total)* the results are not consistent with the studies we identified in the literature, that claim that job satisfaction and counterproductive work behaviors are significantly negatively correlated (Abubakar et al., 2022; Anjum & Parvez, 2013; Centers & Bugental, 1966; Fatima et al., 2012; Ikurayeke et al., 2019; Judge et al., 2006; Mangione & Quinn, 1975). We identified only one study, Shapiro et al. (1995), which suggests that lack of job satisfaction does not influence theft but the correlation requires a deeper analysis, as the results may be due to additional variables introduced into the research. Therefore, our results can also be interpreted with this aspect in mind, as our research lacks additional variables, and correlations may vary depending on factors specific to the organization, the work environment, or the cultural context. Of course, these are only assumptions, as more research is needed to confirm these results.



Conclusions

The present study aimed to investigate the relationships between counterproductive workplace behaviors and job satisfaction, differentiated into intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction. The results revealed significant correlations between extrinsic satisfaction and counterproductive behaviors in total, as well as between job satisfaction and stealing behavior. Extrinsic satisfaction also showed a significantly negative correlation with theft and abuse behavior. Contrary to initial hypotheses, the study invalidated the significant negative correlation between job satisfaction and counterproductive behaviors in total, as well as between intrinsic satisfaction and these behaviors.

This finding suggests a complexity of relationships in the work environment, indicating that certain aspects of satisfaction may influence counterproductive work behaviors in a different way than initially expected.

Limits and future research directions

One of the limitations of our study is that the variables were assessed based on a self-administered questionnaire, so the data collected may be affected by the subjective nature of the responses. Also, none of the tools used were adapted to the Romanian population, which is why the results of the study may not fully reflect the reality. The research emphasizes the need for personalized and organizationally tailored approaches in managing job satisfaction and preventing counterproductive behaviors. The results provide a starting point for developing human resource management strategies that support a healthy work environment and minimize harmful workplace behaviors. Understanding and managing job satisfaction can help increase employee well-being and reduce counterproductive behaviors.

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