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Counterproductive Work Behaviours in an Organization and Their Measurement upon the Example of Research Conducted among Employees in the Public Administration Sector in Poland

Summary

The article discusses primarily the issues of counterproductive work behaviour in the organization. The author focused on measurement of such behaviours using one of the most frequently used scale to measure these behaviours (Counterproductive Work Behaviour Checklist; CWB-C). The aim of the article was also to present preliminary results of a research conducted in 2016 using CWB-C among employees of local government units in Poland. The results show that the scale of involvement of employees is small and the behaviours are rather directed against the organization than the co-workers or supervisors. What is more, they are less serious rather than serious abuses.

Key words: Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB), organizational behaviour, measurement of CWB.

JEL codes: C83, J53

Introduction

Every organization that wants to achieve its targets needs workers for the purposes and the workers' behaviours have to be optimal from the point of view of realization of the targets. This is particularly relevant nowadays in conditions of very intensive competition. Therefore, for an organization it is important to be able to explain and predict behaviours of workers and shape the same in an active manner (Nerdinger 2011, p. 410). However, this is very difficult in practice due to complexity of the problems of behaviours in an organization. In particular, it is due, above all, to the complex psychosomatic structure of a human being as well as multitude and unpredictability of the environment, in which a human being functions. What is more, behaviours of employees do not only have positive aspects for an organization, but they also can be detrimental and expose an organization to measurable damage (Anjum and Parvez 2013, p. 417). The damage can be of interpersonal character (addressed against the other party, including colleagues, subordinates or superiors – for example, stealing or libelling others) or organizational character (addressed against an organization, for example, destroying or stealing of property of an organization).

The aim of the study was to present problems connected with measurement of counterproductive behaviours in an organization. The study also presents the most commonly used scale for measurement of the behaviours, namely Counterproductive Work Behaviours

Checklist (CWB-C), as well as preliminary results of the research conducted with the use of the scale among employees of territorial self-government units in Poland (commune offices).

The complexity of problems of behaviours in an organization

Considering two basic aspects, namely influence of a given behaviour on targets realized by an organization as well as adherence to the current rules of an organization, one may distinguish among four main types of organizational behaviours – see Diagram 1 (Nerdinger 2011, p. 410-412; Glińska-Neweś and Lis 2016, p. 267):

1) OCB – Organizational Citizenship Behaviours; German - extraproduktives Verhalten) – these are voluntary behaviours exceeding the contractual description of duties for a given job and not accepted in the formal system of motivation and, at the same time, contributing to realization of targets of an organization and adhering to principles of an organization. Examples of manifestations of Organizational Citizenship Behaviours include cooperation with other workers, altruism, spontaneous proposals of improvements/voluntary initiatives, activities undertaken in order to protect an organization or contributing to building a positive image of the same, voluntary improvement of skills, perseverance in case of any obstacles (sportsmanship), loyalty towards an organization or active participation in functioning of the same.

2) intrapreneurship – workers undertaking such behaviours are often referred to as "entrepreneurs within an enterprise". Such behaviours are nothing but independent identification of sources of success as well as pro-innovative activity undertaken at one's own

Diagram 1

Types of organizational behaviours as regards reference to targets and rules in an organization
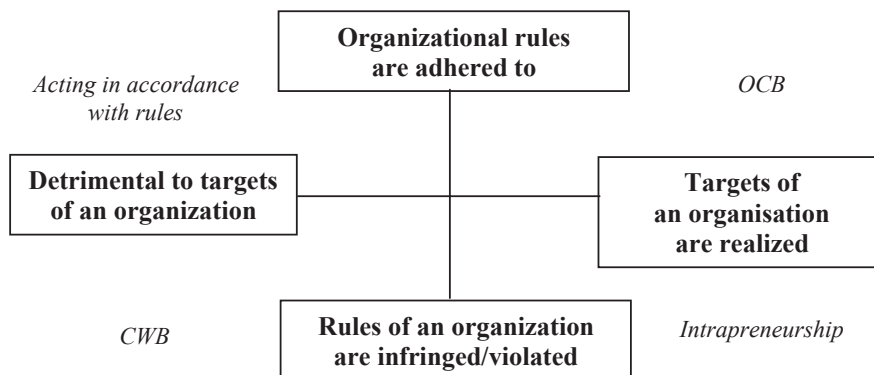
Source: Nerdinger (2011, p. 411).

risk and responsibility. The behaviours not only contribute to realization of targets of an organization, but also infringe rules of an organization. They are contrary to activities based on provisions only, as they assume that complexity of everyday problems makes workers adjust flexibly to the reality and reasonable infringement of rules of an organization. Otherwise, this puts not only development of an organization at risk, but also existence of an organization itself.

3) acting in accordance with provisions (German- Dienst nach Virschriften) – this is a totally red-taped behaviour, based only upon rules of an organization as well as full adherence to the same. However, this type of behaviour causes negative effects for targets of an organization, because, as it has already been mentioned, functioning and development of an organization requires flexible adjustment to the surrounding reality. Similar to entrepreneurship, they have not analysed this sphere of behaviours deeply in literature on the subject.

4) CWB – Counterproductive Work Behaviour; German – kontraproduktives Verhalten) – connected with infringement of rules of an organization, which results in negative effects for realization of its targets.

Counterproductive work behaviours

Counterproductive work behaviours in literature of the subject are also referred to as deviant, dysfunctional, retaliatory, aggressive behaviours, misbehaviours or asocial behaviours (Nerdinger 2011, p. 418; Robinson and Bennett 1995; Spector and others 2006). Absence of coherence as regards terminology and definition makes it impossible to present the complete status of research in this respect. Differences in terms result from various perceptions of the phenomena by particular authors (e.g. the perspective of causes or intentionality of behaviours) (Glińska-Neweś and Lis 2016, p. 268). However, the term of "counterproductive work behaviour" seems to be most adequate for the described phenomenon, as its dimensions are contrary to the above-mentioned Organizational Citizenships Behaviours. Besides, the term is most often used in literature on the subject in relation to behaviours that are detrimental to targets and rules of an organization (Glińska-Neweś and Lis 2016, p. 268).

Most often analysed manifestations of the behaviours include physical/mental violence/aggression and verbal or non-verbal violence/aggression, mobbing/bullying, impoliteness, theft, wasting of resources (including, worktime), sabotage, retaliation, cheating, lying, favouring, gossiping, consumption of alcohol/drugs in the place of work or coming to work under influence of the substances and sexual harassment (Anjum and Parvez 2013, p. 418-419). One may indicate dozens of other forms of the type of behaviour. For example (Gruys and Sackett 2003, p. 34-35) refer to 66 of them dividing them into 11 separate categories (thefts, destruction of property, abuse of information, wasting of time and resources, absenteeism, low quality of work, consumption of alcohol, drug consumption, inappropriate verbal behaviours, inappropriate somatic behaviours).

In connection with variety of forms of counterproductive work behaviours, authors of literature on the subject agree that counterproductive work behaviour should be understood as a bunch of various types of voluntary behaviours opposed to desired behaviours (Organizational Citizenship Behaviours) that can be detrimental to an organization or particular groups of its interests such as workers, customers, shareholders or co-operators (Anjum and Parvez 2013 p. 418; Beauregard 2014, p. 773).

Additionally, in order to refer to counterproductive work behaviours, the following three conditions have to be fulfilled jointly (Nerdinger 2011, s. 41): a behaviour has to be purposeful, there has to be a potential for inflicting damage to an organization or its stakeholders (event if no such damage occurs) and it has to be contrary to official targets of an organization.

Spector i in. 2006 presented the most famous classification of counterproductive work behaviours (Spector i in. 2006, s. 448-450):

1) abuse against others – doing both physical and mental harm to colleagues (e.g. threatening, unpleasant comments, ignoring),
2) production deviance – deliberate omission or hindering realization of task ascribed,
3) sabotage – deliberately destroying or neglecting property of an organization,
4) theft – misappropriation of property of an organization or colleagues,
5) withdrawal – limitation of time devoted to work below a standard necessary for realization of targets of an organization (e.g. unjustified absence, tardiness, leaving before the agreed due time for completion of work, taking breaks longer than permitted by the rules).

Reasons for such types of behaviours or circumstances contributing to the same may be divided as internal and external in relation to a worker (Beauregard 2014, p. 773; Boddy 2014, p. 108; Glińska-Neweś and Lis 2016, p. 269; Chernyak-Hai and Tziner 2014, p. 2):

a) internal (also referred to as endogenous):
- physiological/biological (e.g. specificity of the nervous system or somatic conditions),
- personality-related/cognitive (the method of interpretation of the surrounding reality and events in an organization);
b) external (also referred to as exogenous, situational or environmental):
- physical conditions of work (e.g. ergonomics of a given job),
- the sense of organizational justice (absence of the sense causes frustration and retaliatory trends among workers). This applies both to distributional justice (as regards division of resources and duties) and procedural justice (as regards a worker's attitude and his/her treatment both by superiors and colleagues) (Chernyak-Hai and Tziner 2014, p. 3),
- occupational stress (too high level of stress – e.g. caused by work overload – causes anger and fear),
- balance between work and private life (its absence/deficiency results in occupational stress, fatigue and negative emotions),
- social standards and expectations (e.g. the level of tolerance for specified manifestations of counterproductive work behaviours).

There are a lot of ways to eliminate or limit occurrence of counterproductive work behaviours. Among such behaviours most commonly referred to in literature, the following may be indicated (Nerdinger 2011, p. 420):

1) selection of workers – persons more apt to undertake such behaviours should not be employed. Information obtained from previous employers, letters of reference, information about a candidate for a given job that are displayed in the public (e.g. through social media), personality tests or so-called "stress interviews" may prove particularly helpful. However, one should not overrate such activities and, unfortunately, such activities do not make it possible to eliminate candidates with tendencies to counterproductive work behaviours totally.

2) training for workers and managers with respect to copying with stress, worktime management, human resources management, assertiveness, resolving of conflicts at work, responding to manifestations of aggression, improvement of work efficiency,

3) development of an appropriate style of leadership (e.g. inclusion of workers in management. showing respect to superiors, respecting their dignity and expectations, e.g. as regards remuneration policy),

4) development and enforcement of organizational standards, for example in the form of codes of ethics (including, preventing mobbing, sexual harassment or violence etc.). Apart from development of unambiguous standards and principles, it is extremely important to be aware of inevitability of the same in a given situation – it is only then that such standards will be adhered to,

5) introduction of prompt inspection forms or intensification of inspection activities (e.g. monitoring),

6) ongoing measurement of manifestations of counterproductive work behaviours (including, the scale and intensity of the same) in the form of surveys, interviews, exit surveys or observations in the place of work.

Measurement of counterproductive work behaviours

Counterproductive work behaviours are interdisciplinary and multidimensional phenomena and they are very delicate at the same time. Therefore, in practice, numerous difficulties are encountered when measuring the same (Pecker and Fine, 2015, s. 89), although measurement of causes, scale and intensity of the behaviours is necessary for effective prevention and fighting of the same.

The most common methods of measurement of counterproductive work behaviours include (Pecker and Fine 2015, p. 90):

1) monitoring of safety and work rules (e.g. CCTV cameras, clock cards) – the method has a lot of defects. It does not allow for measurement of some manifestations of counterproductive work behaviours. What is more, in numerous cases, identification of such behaviours is only possible upon elapse of a long period of time.

2) hot-lines – making it possible for workers to report on cases of discriminating behaviours or behaviours that infringe ethics of safety principles (by telephone, email or in writing),

3) survey methods among current workers – these most often include indirect survey methods (random, general or internet surveys), with the use of specialist scales for measurement of counterproductive work behaviours. However, this solution has a considerable drawback – if measurements are made among current workers, it is feared that the survey results will be less reliable, which results from fears of (even anonymous) admitting to undertaking of such types of behaviour,

4) exit surveys (exit interviews) – these most often include surveys or interviews conducted among former workers shortly after they have left an organization, also with the use of specialist scales. The advantage of the group of methods is greater honesty of former workers (and, at the same time, reliability of measurement),

Specialist scales for measurement of counterproductive work behaviours may also relate to attitudes of workers towards involvement in such behaviours or not. In the other case, the measurement is more reliable, as it allows for establishment of the actual scale of occurrence of counterproductive work behaviours (Spector et al. 2010, p. 781).

The types of scales may include one or several selected forms of counterproductive work behaviours. In the first case, one may indicate Interpersonal Conflict Scale At Work (ICAWS). This scale allows for measurement of conflicts in an organization. It consists of four phrases (e.g. "How often do you engage in conflicts with others at work?") and a respondent is asked to refer to each of the phrases using the scale from 1 – no less frequently than once a month or never up to 5 – several times a day[1].

In case of simultaneous measurement of various forms of counterproductive work behaviours, the following two scales are most reliable: Uncivil Workplace Behaviour Questionnaire (UWBQ) [Martin and Hine, 2005] and Counterproductive Work Behaviour Checklist (CWB-C)[2]. The latter is most often used in practice. It was developed by [Spector and others, 2006] and has 3 varieties depending on the number of phrases on the scale (there may be 10, 32, 45 phrases). The phrases relate to each of 5 dimensions in the already mentioned typology of counterproductive work behaviours suggested by P. E. Spector and co-authors. Each of the phrases has an organizational (O) or interpersonal (I) character. A respondent is asked to relate to each of them choosing an answer on the scale from 1 to 5, where: 1 – never, 2 – once or twice, 3 – once or twice a month, 4 – once or twice a week, 5 – every day. Examples of phrases include: "I took a longer break than I was allowed to" (O), "I insulted someone at work verbally" (I), "I looked at private message/someone's property at work without a consent" (I).

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[1] More about ICAWS: http://shell.cas.usf.edu/~pspector/scales/icawspage.html.
[2] More information concerning CWB-C: http://shell.cas.usf.edu/~pspector/scales/cwbcpage.html.

Methodology and results of the author's own research

The author's own research, among others, with the use of CWB-C scale was conducted in the period from June to November 2016 with the use of an online survey method. The survey questionnaire[3] was sent by emails to as many as 2478 commune self-governments in Poland (including 304 municipal communes, 611 municipal and rural communes and 1563 rural communes). The message with the questionnaire includes a request for distribution of the same among all workers of a given commune office.

The measurement method used also made it possible for respondents to remain anonymous and, therefore, allowed for increase of willingness to participate in the survey and, thus, obtain reliable results. It was extremely important due to the sensitive character of the subject of measurement. The online survey also allowed for collection of a large number of answers in a relatively short period of time.

The total of 871 correctly filled in questionnaires were obtained, including 227 from men (27.0%) and 613 from women (73.0%). The respondents were employed in municipal communes (291 respondents, 33.8%), municipal and rural communes (122 respondents, 14.2%) and rural communes (447 respondents, 52.0%). Most of the workers were executive workers (white collar workers) – 556 respondents (64.6%), whereas 305 respondents did managerial jobs (35.4%). The greatest number of respondents indicated a long years of service, i.e. 8 years or longer (560 respondents, 64.5%), 152 respondents worked from 4 to 7 years (17.5%), whereas 156 respondents – no longer than 3 years (18.0%).

Table 1

Averaged* percentage of answers given by respondents in relation to particular categories of counterproductive work behaviours (in %)

CWB category	Never	Rarely	From time to time	Often	Every day
Avoiding work	72.1	24.0	3.5	0.0	0.3
Abuses against others	79.8	17.4	2.5	0.0	0.3
Interference with work	92.5	6.7	0.7	0.0	0.1
Thefts	93.1	5.8	0.9	0.0	0.2
Sabotage	97.5	2.1	0.3	0.0	0.1

* The number of answers of a given type for a given category were divided by the number of questions in a given CWB category.
Source: the author's own study based on the research results.

Upon averaging of the number of answers of a given type (from "never" to "every day") for particular categories of counterproductive work behaviours, it can be stated that the re-

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[3] The questionnaire is available at: https://goo.gl/forms/apAg3uzLCpbEmWd12. Apart from manifestations of counterproductive work behaviours, the research also related to selected manifestations of positive behaviours (OCB). In the first case, the measurement covered such categories of behaviours as anuses against others (9 questions), interference with work (3), sabotage (3), thefts (4) and avoiding work (4).

spondents most often admitted to avoiding work (24.0% rarely; 3.5% from time to time; 0.3% every day) and to abuses against others (respectively: 17.4%; 2.5%; 0.3%). Subsequent places in the ranking were taken respectively by interference with work, thefts and sabotage (see Table 1).

Table 2

Distribution of answers of respondents with respect to the form/manifestation of CWB (in %)

CWB category	CWB form	Never	Rarely	From time to time	Often	Every day
Abuses against others	1. I started or continued a gossip that was destructive or detrimental to somebody at work	88.2	10.4	0.9	0.1	0.3
	2. I mocked somebody's private life	66.9	26.7	5.3	0.5	0.7
	3. I ignored someone at work	50.1	41.3	7.6	0.6	0.5
	4. I blamed someone at work for my own mistakes	74.2	22.5	2.8	0.2	0.3
	5. In insulted someone verbally at work	70.7	25.9	2.2	1.0	0.1
	6. I did something in order to make someone be perceived badly	86.3	10.7	1.4	1.4	0.2
	7. I made a vicious joke in order to shame somebody	90.4	8.6	0.7	0.1	0.1
	8. I looked at somebody's private message/property at work without a consent	89.1	9.0	0.7	0.8	0.5
	9. I hit or pushed someone at work	98.7	0.3	0.7	0.1	0.1
Interference at work	10. I did my work incorrectly on purpose	97.1	2.4	0.5	0.0	0.0
	11. I worked slowly on purpose, when something had to be done	91.3	7.6	0.2	0.6	0.2
	12. I did not act in accordance with instructions on purpose	88.4	9.9	1.4	0.2	0.1
Sabotage	13. I my employer's materials/stocks	95.4	3.5	0.5	0.6	0.1
	14. I destroyed an element of equipment or property on purpose	99.3	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.0
	15. I soiled or littered my work station on purpose	97.1	2.2	0.5	0.1	0.1
Thefts	16. I misappropriated something that belonged to my employer	90.6	8.3	0.7	0.0	0.3
	17. I took stocks or tools home without a consent	90.9	8.0	0.9	0.0	0.1
	18. I applied for payment for more hours than actually worked	94.0	4.3	1.3	0.3	0.1
	19. I misappropriated something that belonged to somebody at work	96.4	2.3	0.6	0.5	0.2
Avoiding work	20. I appeared late at work without a consent	74.4	21.3	3.2	0.8	0.2
	21. I stayed at home saying that I was ill, but I was not	91.7	7.5	0.8	0.0	0.0
	22. I took a longer break than I was allowed to	55.7	36.8	5.9	1.2	0.3
	23. I left my work earlier than I was allowed to	64.2	29.6	4.2	1.2	0.8

Source: as in Table 1.

The Table 2 presents distribution of answers for particular forms (manifestations) of counterproductive work behaviours on CWB-C scale.

The above-mentioned data mean that the scale of involvement of workers of commune offices in Poland in counterproductive work behaviours is minor. The involvement is not greater than the involvement indicated in similar research, for example, among white collar workers (Anjum and Parvez 2013). What is more, similar conclusions are drawn, if one compares categories of most often undertaken counterproductive work behaviours. Thus, these are mainly behaviours addressed against an organization and less frequently addressed personally against colleagues or superiors. What is more, such behaviours are of minor importance. Serious abuses such as physical violence, deliberate destruction of property or stealing property from colleagues are very rarely found.

Conclusions

The article describes problems of measurement of counterproductive work behaviours (CWB) in an organization. The author also presents one of the most often used scales for measurement of the behaviours, namely Counterproductive Work Behaviour Checklist. The scale includes 5 basic categories such as abuses against others, interference with work, sabotage, thefts and avoiding work.

The presented preliminary results of the research done in 2016 with the use of the scale among workers of territorial self-government units in Poland (commune offices) confirm the high reliability of CWB-C scale as regards measurement of counterproductive work behaviours.

Based on the analysed results, it can be stated that the scale of involvement of the worker in counterproductive work behaviours is minor. What is more, there are mainly behaviours addressed against an organization (for example, tardiness) and rarely against colleagues or superiors. It should also be noted that manifestations of counterproductive work behaviours identified in the research are not serious in most cases (these are, for example, vicious jokes and not physical violence against others).

The author hopes that, owing to the presented text, it will be possible to achieve additional targets such as paying attention to relevance and complexity of the problem of such behaviours as well as their consequences for a contemporary organization. Obviously, this article contributes to further discussion and empirical research.

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Antyproduktywne zachowania w pracy w organizacji i ich pomiar na przykładzie badania przeprowadzonego wśród pracowników w sektorze administracji publicznej w Polsce

Streszczenie

Artykuł omawia zagadnienia antyproduktywnego zachowania w pracy w organizacji. Autor skupił się na pomiarze takich zachowań stosując do tego jedną z najczęściej używanych skal do pomiaru zachowań (lista kontrolna antyproduktywnego zachowania w pracy, ang. *Counterproductive Work Behaviour Checklist, CWB-C*). Celem artykułu było również przedstawienie wstępnych wyników badania przeprowadzonego w roku 2016 z wykorzystaniem CWB-C wśród pracowników jednostek samorządu terytorialnego w Polsce. Wyniki pokazują, że skala zaangażowania pracowników jest niewielka, zaś zachowania są raczej skierowane przeciwko organizacji niż współpracownikom czy nadzorcom/ Co więcej, są to zachowania o mniejszym znaczeniu, nie zaś poważne nadużycia.

Słowa kluczowe: antyproduktywne zachowanie w pracy (ang. *Counterproductive Work Behaviour*, CWB), zachowania w organizacji, pomiar CWB.

Kody JEL: C83, J53

Противопродуктивное поведение на работе в организации
и его измерение на примере обследования, проведенного среди
работников в секторе публичной администрации в Польше

Резюме

В статье автор обсуждает прежде всего вопросы противопродуктивного поведения на работе в организации. Он сосредоточил свое внимание на измерении такого поведения, используя для этого одну из чаще всего применяемых шкал измерения такого поведения (англ. *Counterproductive Work Behaviour Checklist; CWB-C*). Цель статьи – представить также предварительные результаты изучения, проведенного в 2016 г. с применением CWB-C среди работников органов местного управления в Польше. Результаты показывают, что масштаб включения работников небольшой, а поведение скорее всего направлено против организации, нежели против сотрудников или надзирателей. Более того, это скорее всего поведение меньшей значимости, а не серьезные злоупотребления.

Ключевые слова: противопродуктивное поведение на работе (англ. *CWB*), организационное поведение, измерение CWB.

Коды JEL: C83, J53

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