



Received on: December 20, 2021

Revised on: February 27, 2022

Accepted on: February 28, 2022

Published on: February 28, 2022

Antecedents of Counterproductive Behaviour: A Study of Federal Semi Government Universities in Pakistan

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How to Cite:

Habib, M. F., Alvi, M. K., & Nemati, A. R. (2022). Antecedents of counterproductive behaviour: A study of federal semi government universities in Pakistan. *Academy of Education and Social Sciences Review*, 2(1), 22–32. <https://doi.org/10.48112/aessr.v2i1.108>

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Abstract

Counter-productive behaviour is believed to be having a significant impact on organizational performance. This study aimed find how interpersonal aggression, presentism, and perceived organizational politics impact employees' counter-productive behaviour in an organization. Using quantitative survey method, the data was collected via Google docs having 5 points likert scale from employees currently serving in the armed forces universities in the federal territory, Islamabad. Regression statistical technique was employed to test the hypothesis whether the chosen variables affected the employees' counter-productive behaviour in the selected universities. The results showed that interpersonal aggression, presentism, and perceived organizational politics do not have impact on the counter-productive behaviour of employees in the armed forces universities. The study indicates the presence of lesser counterproductive behaviour in armed forces universities of Pakistan. Non-armed forces universities in Pakistan are recommended to adopt a unique style of management armed forces universities to liberate the counterproductive behaviour of employees.

Keywords: counterproductive behaviour, interpersonal aggression, perceived organizational politics, presenteeism

INTRODUCTION

Counterproductive behaviour can lead to the downfall of a company. It is the combination of different behaviours, like interpersonal aggression, presenteeism, and perceived organizational politics. Principally, whether a member of an organization violates or obligates the duties of an organization is an intentional act; therefore, the core purpose of the current study was to find out how interpersonal aggression, presenteeism, and perceived organizational politics' impact the behaviour and employees' relationship in an organization. These behaviours severely affect job performance and increase the cost of a company. Workplace environment plays a vital role in determining the behaviour of the employees. In the present study, we have highlighted the factors, that is, interpersonal aggression, presenteeism, and perceived organizational politics, which affect the behaviour of employees. However, among all the behaviours, counterproductive behaviour is considered to have a more crippling effect on worker's behaviour. This behaviour causes work-stress amongst employees in an organization. Due to which, employees damage company resources and waste its material (De Clercq et al., 2019).

Interpersonal aggression refers to behaviours that weaken the physical and psychological unity among colleagues. When you work in a group, interpersonal aggression can take several forms, such as intimidation, avoidance, or refusal to speak to colleagues. These actions are very harmful for workplace environment in which every individual must be united to perform any work (Fox, et al., 2001). It is a fact that instead of avoiding co-workers, individuals must collaborate with their colleagues to achieve their work goal effectively and efficiently (Kelloway & Day, 2005).

Similarly, presenteeism refers to employees' unproductive presence in a workplace due to some illness or health issues. In this case, taking leave from work is considered a better option instead of working because it otherwise affects the overall productivity of an organization (Johns, 2010). The notion of presenteeism has attracted the attention of researchers due to its negative impact on employees' performance (Ferreira, et al., 2019). If an

employee is not fully functional due to any reason, at least one third of its productivity is lost. In case of any illness, presenteeism decreases the productivity step wise, which is highly detrimental to a business.

Perceived Organizational Politics (POP) is a behaviour categorized by an individual's intention to promote his personal interest over organizational interest (Kacmar, et al., 1999). POP is a crucial factor in workplace that cannot be neglected because employees with POP can receive many benefits, such as monetary gains and social status. In general, POP negatively affects the attitude of employees in terms of job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Hassan, et al., 2017). Basically, it is an action taken by any individual within an organization in which he/she tries to lead his personal outcome at the expense of others.

The present study aims to discover the effect of interpersonal aggression, presenteeism, and perceived organizational politics on counterproductive behaviour of employees in a workplace environment. A work environment is a combination of cognitive, behavioural, and emotional skills that are interdependent when performing tasks to improve performance (Paris, et al., 2000). In this study, the interaction between team members was investigated in order to test the relationship between interpersonal aggression, presenteeism, and perceived organizational politics based on counterproductive behaviour. The more the workers interact with each other in a work place, the more interpersonal aggression, presenteeism, and perceived organizational politics are likely to have an effect on counterproductive behaviour. The existing literature on counterproductive behaviours has focused more on workplace bullying and less on the individual and organizational reasons behind counterproductive behaviours (Naseem & Ahmed, 2020). Therefore, the novelty of the present study is its focus on the individual and organizational causes that trigger the counterproductive behaviours among employees.

The current study examined the effects of interpersonal aggression, presenteeism, and perceived organizational politics on counterproductive behaviour of employees. The relationships between counterproductive behaviour and interpersonal aggressions, presenteeism, and perceived organizational politics is also investigated both at the individual and institutional level. Unlike other research studies that investigated counterproductive behaviours of employees working in industrial and banking sectors, the present study has been conducted in the education sector with a focus on universities.

LITERATURE VIEW

Underpinning Theories

The interpersonal aggression can be studied in the light of displaced aggression theory that suggests that managers harass people and people react to less powerful colleagues or the organization because they are less powerful in confronting their abusive superiors (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). Similarly, the theory of effective events is applicable to presenteeism. It states that when employees face work stress in daily routine, it affects their emotions, losing at least one third of their productivity. At the individual level, non-productive behaviour causes post-traumatic stress, emotional exhaustion, and mental health problems. Post trauma stress is the mental health condition that is caused by some traumatic events that are either faced or witnessed by employees. Moreover, the social exchange theory works well for perceived organizational politics. The theory studies the social behaviour of two parties in interaction to analyse risk and benefit. In terms of counterproductive work behaviour, the two-factor motivation theory explains that employees do not need an increase in pay or any bonus for their motivation; they need appreciation, respect, and honour from an organization.

Counterproductive Behaviour

Counterproductive behaviour drives against an organizational benefit. The counterproductive behaviour in any workplace is very damaging as it causes obstruction between the goal of an organization and the organization and reduces the performance of its employees (Spector & Fox, 2002). To achieve a certain target, organizations demand specific tasks from everyone. Due to this type of behaviour, when employees work opposite to the assigned work, their job performance decreases and as a result, the cost of the organization increases. The effect of counterproductive behaviour on organization is much more than on the employees because with the passage of time, the organization reaches a point where it has risks of being terminated. The employees might get jobs in any other organizations, but the organization itself can never come back to its previous stable stage. Counterproductive behaviour is most of the time witnessed when co-workers interact with each other to achieve a goal because difference of opinion arises and as a result people do not give due respect to others' opinion and try to humiliate each other. Consequently, the organization faces low productivity, absenteeism, and increase in turnover (Penney & Spector, 2005).

People may accept counterproductive work behaviour to overcome time related stress on their wellbeing (Taylor, et al., 2017). When employees of the organization are not mentally strong and their psychological position is unstable, there is a dim chance for the company to retain its productivity as the moral of the organizational team decreases. This behaviour can reduce the organizational goal and disturb its internal operations (Cohen, 2016). The employees who interrupt an organization's internal operations directly, affect their future and others' appraisals as well (Lievens et al., 2008). This behaviour also affects employees in the form of decreasing job satisfaction, job stress (Penney & Spector, 2005) leading to mental and monetary issues. Counterproductive behaviour can be of different types and all are interlinked with each other; whenever one type is developed, other types inevitably follow. For example, if a person has zero job satisfaction, he cannot avoid absenteeism. Hence, employees who have counterproductive work behaviour can damage not only organizations, but their own careers as well (De Clercq et al., 2019). Moreover, employees' behaviour is also adversely affected when organizations mistreat their employees.

Interpersonal Aggression

Any behaviour of an employee in an organization, which intends to harm other employees in the same organization is called interpersonal aggression (Hershcovis, et al., 2007), which can be harmful for the environment of an organization (Hassard et al., 2018). Interpersonal aggression also includes not giving respect to other colleagues and insulting them either verbally or physically. Generally, organizations have a common goal and all workers make efforts to achieve that goal together as a team; however, when team-members do not support each other and try to humiliate one another, it becomes difficult for the organization to achieve its goal with that team. In many cases, the source of interpersonal aggression cannot be measured (Chen, 2018). Harmful behaviours in organization are the base of collateral damage for organization as well as coworkers (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). Continuous aggression between organizational co-workers leads to the extinction of organizations and when the organizations are no more than the jobs of the workers are also lost. Interpersonal aggression does not occur from one source; there may be multiple sources that transmit aggression to employees. It is observed that, most of the aggressive behaviour is faced by high level authority (Zhao, et al., 2018). Interpersonal aggression has the potential to increase absenteeism and turnover intentions in employees. For instance, when an employee continuously insults and humiliates his/her colleagues, absenteeism and turnover intention arise from the affected employees, who then try to find another job. Usually, organizations

work in teams and if any member of a team is not working efficiently, it disturbs the whole team. Hence, interpersonal aggressive behaviour hampers the success of team work as it targets the team members (Walter & Brunch, 2008).

Presenteeism

Presenteeism is basically associated with the work of employees and it may vary from individual to individual (Schultz et al., 2009). Lack of productivity among the employees of an organization arises due to presenteeism and absenteeism (Bierla, et al., 2013). Presenteeism measures the lack of employees' productivity after their absence due to any personal issue. It is basically a situation in which taking leave is considered a better option than continuing work because when an employee is physically or mentally ill, chances of his/her mistakes at work increase, which jeopardizes organizational work. Teachers and paramedical staff have faced presenteeism more than the employees in any other occupation (Aronsson, et al., 2000). Teachers and paramedical staff have a tough schedule starting from morning till evening and then they start preparing for the next day. Employees who have monetary demands from the workplace face more presenteeism as compared to those employees who are in higher positions (Aronsson & Gustafsson, 2005). Monetary demand is a situation in which employees avoid absences in order to prevent salary deduction. It also includes sitting late nights in office just for overtime compensation.

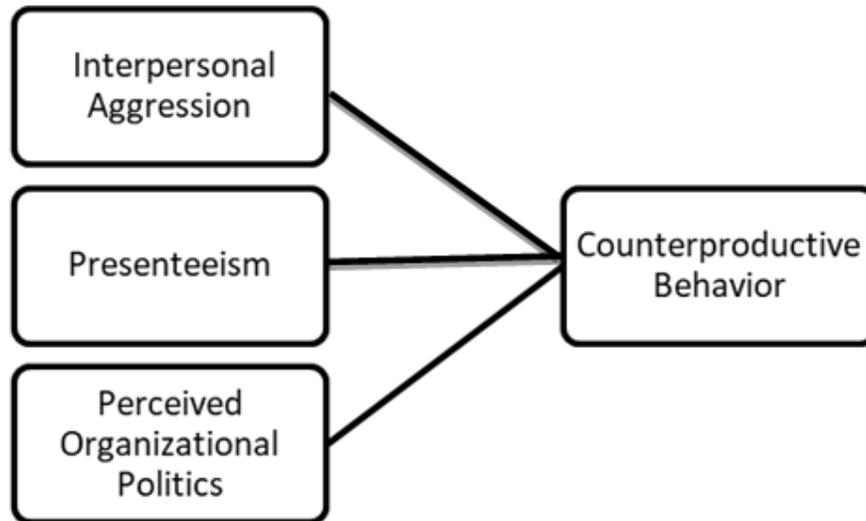
Presenteeism is not a gender issue as both men and women are likely to face this problem equally. Psychological issues, like depression and stress are the main causes of regular presenteeism (Marlowe, 2002). Any factor that makes it difficult for the employees to take leave can give rise to presenteeism. If an organization does not give leaves to its employees and forces them to come in any situation, it will have detrimental effects on the organization.

Perceived Organizational Politics

Perceived organizational politics is a strategic action taken by any individual at the cost of an organization. Perceived organizational politics is a concept by which employees of an organization work hard to gain self-benefits instead of organizational benefits by playing politics at workplace for their own advantage. In short, POP is the study of power in action, and is influenced by personal norms.

Perceived organizational politics has a negative effect on job satisfaction, job security, turnover intentions, and behaviours. For instance, an employee who is not good at workplace politics when sees other employees taking advantage and benefits by playing politics is likely to lose job satisfaction and will leave the organization. POP causes low productivity and lack of efficiency (Kroon et al., 2018). According to Abbas et al. (2014), POP is basically a way in which an employee has a self-centred thinking. Work attitudes, such as job satisfaction, turnover, and neglect behaviour have a negative relationship with perceived organizational behaviours (Meisler & Vigoda-Gadot, 2014). Emotional behaviours of individuals act as an arbitrator between POP and employees' behaviour. When employees of an organization want to advance themselves or their ideas, regardless of those ideas being helpful for the company or not, POP occurs. In this study, a total of 4 variables are considered. While three of them are independent variables, that is, interpersonal aggression, presenteeism, and perceived organizational politics, one is the dependent variable, that is, counterproductive behaviour.

Figure 1
Framework



The following three hypotheses emerge based on the objectives of the study and in-depth literature review:

H₁: Interpersonal aggression has a significant impact on counterproductive behaviour of employees

H₂: Presenteeism has a significant impact on counterproductive behaviour of employees

H₃: Perceived Organization Politics has a significant impact on counterproductive behaviour of employees

METHODOLOGY

Quantitative survey method was used to gather data from employees working at four top armed forces universities within the federal area of Pakistan. Convenience sampling was preferred due to the pandemic situation for which participants from administrative as well as academics were included without any distinction of level. To receive data from the participants, a questionnaire with two sections was used. The first section included the participants' demographic information and the second section comprised the three scales associated with the counterproductive behaviour of employees. The scales included Interpersonal Aggression (IA), Presenteeism (PTM), Perceived Organizational Politics (POP), and Counterproductive Behaviour (CPB). All of the scales were measured based on 5-points likert scale having 1 as the least while 5 as the highest level of agreement. A total of 150 conveniently selected employees currently serving in the selected universities were contacted to participate in the study. Nevertheless, 101 valid responses were received. Due to Covid-19 pandemic, Google doc questionnaires were distributed on the official and personal email IDs of the participants. Both the descriptive and inferential analyses were run on the received data using statistical package.

RESULTS & FINDINGS

Descriptive Analysis

In the descriptive analysis, the characteristics of the participating individuals. From this perspective, a large number of participants were aged between 31 and 35. A significant number of participants were male and most of the participants had MS/ MPhil degree. In this section, the received responses were also described. For instance, Table 1 describes the descriptive statistics of the received responses.

Table 1
Received Responses

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
IA	103	1.00	5.00	1.9068	.88874
PTM	103	1.00	5.00	3.1618	.80150
POP	103	1.67	5.00	3.0917	.60167
CPB	103	1.05	4.20	2.1243	.54340

Before performing the inferential analysis, the internal consistency of the scales was measured and found satisfactory and thus none of the items used under each scale was supposed to be deleted. For instance, the Cronbach Alpha value of IA was found .902 having 10 items; the Cronbach Alpha value of PTM was found .814 having 6 items; the Cronbach Alpha value of POP was found .732 having 9 items; and the Cronbach Alpha value of CPB was found .771 having 20 items. According to Christmann and Van Aelst (2006), “The values 0.7 or 0.75 are often used as cut-off value for Cronbach’s alpha and thus for the reliability of the test” (p. 1661).

Inferential Analyses

Table 2 presents the summary of scales (variables) and their overall relationships. In this way, the R (.143) is the square root of R-Squared that shows the correlation between the predicted and observed values of the dependent variable (Counterproductive Behaviour). R-Square, in Table 2, shows the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (Counterproductive Behaviour) that can be predicted from the independent variables (Interpersonal Aggression, Presenteeism, and Perceived Organizational Politics). The value .021 indicates that 02.1% of the variance in Counterproductive Behaviour can be predicted from the variables Interpersonal Aggression, Presenteeism, and Perceived Organizational Politics.

Table 2
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.143a	.021	-.009	.54587

a. Predictors: (Constant), POP, PTM, IA

Table 3 displays that none of the independent variable has a statistically significant impact on the dependent variable, as none of the variable has sig value less than .05.

Table 3
Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.359	0.318		7.419	0
1 IA	0.063	0.067	0.103	0.931	0.354
PTM	0.025	0.07	0.037	0.356	0.722
POP	-0.14	0.102	-0.155	-1.377	0.172

a. Dependent Variable: CPB

Discussion

This research shows zero impact of interpersonal aggression, presenteeism, and perceived organizational politics on counterproductive behaviour of employees in an organization. Although the existing literature on these elements shows a strong relationship between them and the counterproductive behaviour, the present study did not find any significant impact of such variables. This could be attributed to the fact that armed forces universities in Pakistan have strict rules and most of its management is either ex-army or on-duty army personnel. Military rules are generally rigid and the hierarchal system is very clear and concise, which does not harbour any disagreements along the reporting line with all the orders/instructions to be carried out without question.

Counterproductive behaviour has damaging effect on the organization and it destroys the company's vision and goals. The more counterproductive behaviour there is, there are more chances of a company to go obsolete. Hence, by reducing variables, like interpersonal aggression, presenteeism, and perceived organizational politics, organizations can easily reduce the counterproductive behaviour. The presence of counterproductive behaviour does not only damage the organization's work but also the mental health of its employees. Although armed forces universities employ civilians as well, the degree of counterproductive behaviour is still less as compared to non-armed forces universities. The reason could be the environment, which plays a vital role. For example, in a university like Bahria, civilians also do their work, but they are not allowed to argue with the management or among themselves. The environment of the organization does not allow any activity that can be harmful for the organization and its reputation.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study shows that the presence of counterproductive behaviour in armed forces universities of Pakistan is lesser than other universities and that interpersonal aggression, presenteeism, and perceived organizational politics have no relation with counterproductive behaviour. Interpersonal aggression in these universities was found to be less between middle level employees and workers due to their organized rules and discipline. Likewise, presenteeism among the employees of these universities does not impact counterproductive behaviour due to the level of accommodation employees are provided with, respect to leave which positively affects employees' performance. Similarly, the reason why perceived organizational politics is found to have no relation with counterproductive behaviour is the strict regulations and rules of armed forces institutes, which provide no room for politics and manipulation. These universities are also found to have well

organized rules and policies for promotions, incentives, hiring, and termination, resulting in a positive workplace environment.

The current research study is beneficial for non-armed forces universities because they can use the results to decrease the counterproductive behaviour in their system by implementing the strategies of armed forces universities. As armed forces have a unique style of management and they are known for their discipline and rigorous implementation; therefore, it is recommended that other government universities should follow their style of management in order to liberate the counterproductive behaviour.

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