
The Relationship Between Organizational Culture and Counterproductive Work Behavior in Public Universities in Western Region, Kenya

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ABSTRACT: *This study examined the relationship between organizational culture and counterproductive work behavior (CWB) among employees of public universities in Western Kenya region. Specifically, the study investigated the relationship between leadership behavior, ethical standards and CWB in the six public universities. The study adopted the explanatory survey design, and targeted 4,476 employees, stratified into academic and non-academic staff. Data was collected using questionnaires from a random sample of 506. Cronbach alpha coefficient was >0.9. The study results revealed that organizational culture had a significant effect on counterproductive work behavior with $r=-.608^{**}$. The study recommends that public universities strive to create a positive environment within the workplace and to stimulate strong organization cultures, which will lead to positive employee work behavior and performance.*

KEYWORDS: counterproductive work behavior, organizational culture, deviant behavior, ethical standards, organizational leadership behavior

INTRODUCTION

Counterproductive work behaviors are founded in organizational typology, which is related to the organization itself (Biron, 2010; Vardi, 2001). Certain organizational factors make the organizational environment more vulnerable and prone to counterproductive work behavior (Fox et al, 2001). An individual's behavior in a social environment is directed by the displays of behavior from other people within their surroundings on information regarding values, norms, expectations, and behavior outcomes (Glomb & Liao, 2003). The individual learns, through observation, what others do and what they can, or cannot get away with. The structure, norms, procedures and organization values are therefore fundamental in determining how people may react to organization linked situations. In particular, it has been suggested that an organization's culture identifies the things organization members should be aware of, how they respond emotionally, and what actions they should take (Schein, 2004). For example, a lack of control and accountability at work, unethical role models, and weak sanction for violations encourages such behavior. On the other hand, friendships at work and a generally friendly work environment increase support and resources that help individuals do their work, which in turn, help to reduce

CWB (Yen & Teng, 2013). Accordingly, CWB is related to an organization's environment, and thus, workers' actions could be explained by factors directly related to the organizational culture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Social Exchange Theory (SET) by Blau, 1964 proposes that one's actions will most likely depend upon the reactions of others (Memon et al, 2016). SET assumes that social behavior results from an exchange, whose purpose is to capitalize on benefits and reduce expenses. SET therefore gave a firm theoretical underpinning for this study, by explaining how organizational culture was capable of playing a key role in influencing individuals' behavior at work. This study examined organizational culture as a determinant of counterproductive work behavior with the supposition that the dealings of an organization were expected to lead to a response in form of certain behavior, in this case, CWB by the employees. Based on SET, it was therefore hypothesized that, when an organization provides a desirable working environment, a positive, ethical and supportive climate, and even good leadership, employees will respond by behaving in productive ways.

Counterproductive Work Behavior

Nearly every day, stories abound about people, who for one reason or another, engage in behavior that is socially undesirable. Such acts have become so frequent, that they could even be construed as being social norms (Klotz and Buckley, 2013). These negative behaviors, also known as counterproductive behavior are, more often than not, transferred to the workplace.

Counterproductive work behavior (CWB) is any deliberate behavior on the part of an organization's member and which the organization views as different from its legal interests (Gruys & Sackett, 2003). It is voluntary behavior that contravenes or goes against the significant organizational norms, and in so doing, threatens the interests of both the organization and its members (Saeed et al, 2014). It is generally a very pervasive and expensive problem to organizations, and cuts across different industries and countries (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Fox et al, 2001; Berry et al, 2007). CWB is responsible for giving an organization a negative image to both its external and internal stakeholders.

From the beginning of the Industrial Revolution to the present day, employers have had to contend with this behavior from employees that damages organizational well-being. Accounts of CWB can be traced as far back as 1811, in Nottinghamshire, where some disgruntled knitters would raid knitting workshops as a protest against their employers who were using technology to drive down wages (Klotz and Buckley, 2013). This set a precedent in which employees retaliate in a destructive manner against the perceived injustice of the actions of organizational leaders. CWB has now become a common occurrence in organizations, and may range from minor to severe types of CWB. According to previous studies by Bolin and Heatherly (2001), a majority of employees were reported to have engaged in one form of CWB or other (for example stealing the organization's property, filing fake claims, and absenteeism). Such behaviors are very detrimental

to organizations in terms of low productivity, higher maintenance costs, and tarnishing the organization's image (Aquino et al, 2004; Bennett and Robinson, 2000; Vigoda, 2002). With the advent of the computer and the internet, the opportunity for employee misbehavior is at their fingertips, literally (Everton et al, 2005). In practice, when CWB becomes a common behavioral norm in any organization, it then constitutes a costly organizational problem (Colbert, et al, 2004).

ORGANIZATION CULTURE

The culture of an organization is a pattern of common basic suppositions acquired by a given group in the course of solving problems during external adjustment and internal assimilation (Zeqiri & Alija, 2016). An organization's culture evolves from a range of sources, among them being its history, founders, its policies and practices (Tănase, 2015). This develops over time, becoming a powerful force in determining the organization's behavior and that of any newcomers to it. The culture of the organization interacts with the characters of people to create a predisposition to draw out good or bad behavior.

The organization can therefore, contribute to dysfunctional behaviors by creating social conditions promoting CWB by generating deviant inclinations, or by lowering restraints against CWBs such as violent actions (Van Fleet & Griffin, 2006). Even when the individual employee's predisposition is high, the actual display of CWB will most likely occur when cognitively based inhibitory restraints by the firm are minimal (Van Fleet & Griffin, 2006). In certain organization cultures, members are alienated and defensive, viewing the leaders as enemies and being antagonistic towards them and the firm. These are more prone to elicit violence and other types of CWB (Van Fleet & Griffin, 2006). Other organizations, termed as toxic, depend on workers who are corrupt and deceitful to succeed (Appelbaum et al, 2007).

It is important for an organization to boast of a culture that supports equitable processes and outcomes. According to Everton et al (2007), such a culture is supported and demonstrated through explicit organizational policies, processes and codes of conduct, and implicitly through the pattern of behavior of all employees (norms), starting from the top to the work teams. This study considered leadership behavior and ethical standards as indicators of an organization's culture.

Leadership behavior

Organizational leaders are likely the most dominant determinants of an organization's culture since they set the character/tone of their organization, define its norms and values, and create and maintain a character of what their organization is really like (Van Fleet & Griffin 2006). The culture and leadership approach of the organization in turn influences individuals at the workplace (Lok & Crawford, 2004). Research holds that an organization's leaders shape its culture, but the culture also shapes the leaders. According to Tourigny et al, (2003), the character of organizations have some level of influence on the integrity and ethics of the executives, even as qualities of

leaders are also revealed to be critical in developing an organization's culture (Ribiere & Sitar, 2003). Organizations that are dysfunctional generally do not succeed in achieving organizational goals and are also frequently notable for having poor leaders who prohibit groups from effective achievement of their responsibilities (Paul, 2002).

Kelloway and Barling (2010) suggest that the characteristic of organizational leadership can be associated with a wide range of both negative and positive employee outcomes. Leadership styles such as transformational leadership, can affect individuals and the organization positively, while minimizing deviant behavior. Further, Cemaloglu's (2011) study established that styles of leadership are determinants of organization's health, with leaders exhibiting transformational leadership characteristics significantly improving the health of the organizational and reducing such CWBs as bullying.

According to Trevino and Brown (2005), leaders who employ unethical practices frequently create an environment of allowance in the organization that's conducive to CWB that parallels that of the leader. The employees will normally observe their CEO or managing director's ethical judgement, and are prone to imitate, even if such imitation means acting unethically (Appelbaum et al, 2007). The likelihood of employee imitation will be determined by whether a leader is rewarded for his/her behavior or not.

Several studies have concluded that the reason for continued unethical behavior at the place of work is most likely linked to the deficiency in moral leadership in organizations. Bernie Ebbers, WorldCom's former CEO, was once hailed as a great leader for helping develop his organization into a telecommunications superpower. But his standing was later ruined because he failed to provide ethical leadership during the company's openly drawn-out financial scandals, which unfortunately, caused a very major bankruptcy filing in the history of the USA (Trevino & Brown, 2005). While his management skills obtained enormous success for his organization, his lack of ethical leadership caused his ultimate demise, with his success motivating the lower ranking employees, to go to even more unscrupulous lengths to take part in their own organization's outcomes.

Ethical Standards

There is also a marked increase in the interest among researcher and practitioners about ethical behavior in organizations, especially given the scandals within the corporate world (D'Aquila, et al, 2004; Forte, 2004; Martin & Cullen, 2006). The ethical environment of a firm makes up part of its culture and values and can predict deviant workplace behavior like bullying (Peterson, 2002). According to Appelbaum et al (2005) some of the major factors that influence the organization's ethical climate and standards include, but is not limited to – company profit, personal self-interest, team interests, personal morality, rules, and professional codes. However, the primary factor is top management's behavior, since what they do, and the culture established and reinforced by

them, makes a big difference in how the lower-level employees act, and ultimately, the whole organization when faced with ethical dilemmas (Appelbaum et al, 2005).

Leaders of organizations who themselves engage in immoral and unethical practices normally create an organization atmosphere that can allow and is favorable to deviant behavior (Trevino & Brown, 2005). Employees will observe the way their CEOs or managing directors act when faced with ethical judgement, and are often likely to imitate them, even if such imitation means acting unethically. Depending on whether a leader is rewarded for his/her behavior, this will help determine the likelihood of employee imitation (Appelbaum et al, 2007). The strength of a firm's ethical climate can also be determined by how strongly employees are attached to its norms and policies. In a stronger ethical climate, clear messages are conveyed to employees by their organization as to the expected behaviors, which are then reinforced using rewards and punishment. This likely will result in employees choosing ethical behavior when confronted by ethical dilemmas, leading to more organizational success in tackling such issues Appelbaum et al (2005). It is therefore suggested that, an organization can turn out to be dysfunctional, simply because its culture is a reflection of the dysfunction of top executives (Kets de Vries, 2004; Kersten, 2005).

This paper therefore seeks to test the hypothesis that:

H₀₁: There is no statistically significant relationship between organizational culture and counterproductive work behavior.

METHODOLOGY

This study used the positivist research philosophy and an explanatory research design. It was undertaken in the western region of Kenya, which boasts of six public universities, namely Maseno University, Rongo University, Kisii University, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, and Kibabii University. The target population included academic and non-academic staff of the six universities, totaling 4,476 employees, with a final sample size of 506. Stratified and simple random sampling were used to select the respondents from each stratum. Data was obtained through questionnaires put in a matrix form on a 5-point likert scale, and analyzed using SPSS version 25.

DATA ANALYSIS

To determine the reliability of the research instrument in this study, a pilot study was done at Moi University, comparable to the institutions being used in the real study as far as characteristics and behaviors of interest were concerned. The instrument was reliable as all the variables met the threshold of a minimum of 0.70. Validity was also assured as the sample was acceptable, with KMO values of 0.505 and 0.724.

Presentation of Findings**Effect of Organizational Culture on Counterproductive Work Behavior****Table 1 Model Summary of Organizational Culture**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.608 ^a	0.370	0.369	0.46241

The model summary presented in table 1 shows that for organizational culture (X_1), the outcome was: the coefficient of determination (R square) of 0.370. This indicated that the model explained 37% variation or change in the dependent variable. The remaining proportion of 63% variation can be explained by other factors other than organizational culture. Adjustment of the R square did not change the results substantially, having reduced the explanatory behavior of the predictor from 37% to 36.9%. This means that the model is fit to be used to generalize the findings.

Table 2: ANOVA Table: Goodness of Fit Test Results of Organizational Culture

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	50.529	1	50.529	236.307	.000 ^b
	Residual	85.958	402	0.214		
	Total	136.486	403			

a. Dependent Variable: Worker behavior

b. Predictors: (Constant), Organizational Culture

Source: Field Data (2022)

Table 2 shows the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of the relationship between organizational culture and CWB in public universities in Western Kenya. The study results indicated that the model is statistically significant in explaining the relationship between organizational culture and CWB in the public universities in Western Kenya (p -value<0.05). In this regard, the null hypotheses H_{01} is rejected and it is concluded that there is indeed significant effect of organizational culture on CWB in the public universities in Western Kenya region.

Table 3: Coefficients of Organization Culture and Counterproductive Work Behavior

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized T	Sig.
		Coefficients			
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	4.412	0.072	61.145	0.000
	OC	-0.413	0.027	-0.608	-15.372

a. Dependent Variable: Counterproductive Work Behavior

Table 3 presents the regression results of organization culture on counterproductive work behavior in public universities in western Kenya region, with a constant (p-value = 0.000) of 4.412. This implies that even without organizational culture, the public universities seemed to display some form of negative work behavior. The gradient coefficient of -.413 is the extent to which a unit change in organizational culture (OC) caused a change in work behavior. Therefore, the organization culture and work behavior model are presented as:

$$Y = 4.412 + (-.413)X_1 + \varepsilon$$

T-test was used to identify whether the predictor was making a significant contribution to the model. When the t-test associated with B value is significant then the predictor is making a significant contribution to the model. The results show that organizational culture ($t = -15.372$, $P < 0.05$). This means that organization culture was significant (p-value = 0.000) in negatively influencing counterproductive work behavior in public universities in western Kenya region.

DISCUSSION

An organization's culture is known to be a powerful force in determining its behavior and that of its employees. Uche (2018) posits that culture can actually cause the workers to behave either negatively or positively, and that a friendly and favorable atmosphere is seen as a catalyst for lowering employee inclinations towards engagement in CWB. This is because the culture within an organization interacts with the characters of the people within it to create a predisposition to either draw out or stop dysfunctional behavior. These findings are supported by Ndlovu, et al (2017) who notes that an organization's culture brought about different levels of commitment and behavior from employees. It also revealed that if the organization showed care and support to its workers, they in turn felt a sense of belonging and obligation to help the firm achieve its objectives. Naranjo-Valencia et al, (2016) and Indiya et al, (2018) found a positive and significant effect of organization culture on employee behavior. Other study findings by Kiplangat et al. (2017) indicate that there was a significant and positive relationship between the type and quality of leadership within an institution and the attitude and behavior of its employees. An organization's leaders are likely the most dominant determinants of an organization's culture since they lay down the character of their firms, identify its norms and values, and build and sustain the character of their organization. Their behavior will therefore either predict negative or positive employee behavior. For example, depending on whether managers are supportive or unsupportive, this will predict employee behavior, their job satisfaction, engagement and even turnover intentions (Teoh, et al. 2016). Appelbaum et al, (2012) found that ethical leadership, plus an ethical climate were very effective tools for countering CWB at the workplace.

Public universities should strive to create strong organization cultures that show care and support to their workers, who will in turn feel a sense of belonging and obligation to help the organization

achieve its objectives. It would therefore be advisable for universities in Western Kenya to diagnose their cultures and see how these affect workers, their behavior, performance and commitment to the organization. These arguments and findings are underpinned by the social exchange theory since employees will reciprocate positive cultures by displaying positive behavior as opposed to counterproductive work behavior.

IMPLICATIONS

Theoretically, this study supports and extends the social exchange theory (SET) in that employees will reciprocate positive gestures and policies from the organization by showing citizenship behavior and not CWB. Thus, the improvement of an organization's culture has the capacity to revolutionize the organizational environment so much so that the employees will reciprocate by being productive and in their best behavior.

For management purposes, the universities must adjust to a culture that is based on strong ethical values shared by the whole organization, creating a united and solid organization structure. The employees should also adopt the same frame of mind, with management actively participating in ensuring that these norms filter down to the whole organization, by promoting and maintaining this new organization climate (Appelbaum et al. 2005).

In terms of policy, there is need to entrench and strengthen strategies for the improvement of the organizational culture in order to achieve positive employee work behaviors. Policy makers and practitioners should also embrace social competence and improve on it in their policy formulations.

CONCLUSIONS

Organizational culture is a great contributor to the reduction of counterproductive work behavior. The improvement of organizational culture is thus extremely important. Therefore, a strategic formula, embedding dimensions of organizational culture within the public universities' policy frameworks is evidently necessary. A positive organizational culture has the capacity to stimulate employees' enthusiasm and creativity which in the long run will discourage counterproductive work behavior. It will also allow employees to have a sense of mission and a feeling of responsibility, causing them to work towards the overall good of the organization. When an organization provides a desirable working environment and a positive culture, employees will respond by behaving in constructive ways. It therefore remains incumbent upon public universities and their stakeholders to blend positive organizational culture-oriented policies in order to reduce negative employee work behavior. In view of this, it remains especially necessary for public universities to analyze and strengthen HRM practices which promote a positive environment and organizational culture and also boosts employee performance.

FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study examined organizational culture and counterproductive work behavior, it has also presented a rich prospect for other areas to be researched on in future. In terms of industry, the study was only confined to the public tertiary education sector. It would however be useful to carry out similar studies across heterogeneous industries. Future research should therefore expand to other industries and contexts because organizational cultures vary according to sector and country.

Further studies should also be carried out to investigate other origins and determinants of workplace deviance as well as how organizations can minimize the occurrence of CWB. Besides, future studies may focus on how certain factors may moderate the effect of organizational culture on counterproductive work behavior in public universities and other industries.

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