



Use of technology and Counterproductive work behavior

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ABSTRACT

Considering the various risk factors that influence on a healthy workplace, the objective of this paper focus on the influence of the use of technology towards counterproductive work behavior. The study specifically focuses on the Counterproductive work behavior towards organization (CWB-O). The consequences of these behavior ranges from minor outcomes to serious outcomes. Despite the growing interest on the studies on workplace deviance, research into technology intervened Counterproductive work behavior has always been less focused. Many documents on counterproductive work behavior has been reviewed, examined, studied and discussed. Counterproductive work behavior is detrimental and costly for the survival of organization. The misuse of information and communication technology in the workplace is a growing problem that is expected to continue or to tend upwards. Penetration of technology into job related role grows higher and inevitable. The use of personal mobile devices becomes institutionalized, and it is the right time for the managers now to decide how much of working hours will they tolerate their employees spending on personal issues during their working hours. Putting it in another way, managers must also cope with the reality that a certain amount of what was once considered to be a deviant behavior in the workplace previously may now become mandatory. This study proposes a potential approach and conceptual clarity on counterproductive use of technology. The absence of a strong program against technology misuse at workplace would still remain as a challenge for the organizations in losing its reputation and its employees.

KEYWORDS

Counterproductive work behavior (CWB), Computer misuse, Cyberloafing, Cyberslacking, Retaliation, Reputation, Cyberaggression, Cyberdeviancy.

Introduction:

Organizations are increasingly interested in assessing CWB among its employees. The workplace is characterized by both internal and external environment. CWB is generally considered to be destructive and injurious to the health of the organization. It affects the individual, groups, investors, customers, community and organization as a whole. CWB includes: Abusive behavior, physical and verbal aggression, making intentionally improper work, sabotage, theft, absenteeism, misuse of confidential information, delay at work, poor attendance, and poor quality of work. "The behaviors that are intended to have a detrimental effect on the part of the organization and its members" (Fox, Spector 2001). "Any intentional behavior on the part of the organization that is viewed as contrary to its legitimate interest" (Sackett, 2001).

Counterproductive work behavior in the workplace consists of undesired behaviors whose consequences are considered as negative and unfavorable. Increased attention is given to wide range of CWB as suggested by various authors such as: interpersonal aggression (Neuman & Baron, 1998), antisocial behavior (Giacalone & Greenberg, 1997), deviant workplace behaviours (Robinson & Bennett, 1995), mobbing (Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996), bullying (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003), revenge (Bies, Tripp, & Kramer, 1997) and retaliation (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997).

Regardless of the increasing prevalence of the misuse of information and communications technologies (ICTs) in organizations, these forms of deviant behaviors remain understudied (Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006). Results from previous studies demonstrate that organizations are experiencing an increase in ICT misuse. Webb (1991) stated in his study that \$85 billion was the cost due to internet misuse in an American organization. These behaviors are often not heard about until they result in a serious loss or unless they are directly observed. Em-

ployee deviance and misbehavior produce organizational losses estimated to range from \$6 to \$200 billion annually (Murphy, 1993). Of all employees, 33 to 75 percent have engaged in some of the following behaviors: theft, computer fraud, cheating, destruction, harm, and absenteeism (Harper, 1990).

Counterproductive use of technology:

Technology in workplace has become hazardous recently. This has become a significant challenge to the organization. Some of their impacts are: disciplinary action, termination of employees, leakage of confidential information, reputation loss and so on. The counterproductive use of technology ranges from minor outcomes like internet surfing during working hours to more serious outcomes like watching pornographic videos and sharing confidential information. Between these two extremes lies the mid-range behavior like illegal downloading, hacking co-workers or superiors computers, entering into others payroll database etc. The two most common forms of ICT prevalence at workplace were corporate emails and network connectivity yielding access to internet (Negroponte, 1995). This is where technology misuse was first enabled in workplace. Non-sanctioned use of ICTs was growing upwards towards the employees. The outcomes of ICT misuse created cost to the organization, wasting employees' time, and also spending time on non-work related tasks during working hours. The non work related tasks include

- Playing games
- Personal online banking
- Updating personal blogs
- Social media (Facebook, twitter, SMS)
- Squander time using emails.

The more serious study on these issues also paved a way to study on Internet addiction. The technology advancement, the connectivity, speed direct the employees more towards

technology misuse. Henle and Blanchard (2008) proposed a stress-coping explanation and found that ICT misuse is an emotion focused mechanism. It also stated that technology misuse at workplace is due to role conflict and role ambiguity at work and thus the prevalence of these behaviors reduce the individual stress. Caplan (2007) found that socially anxious individuals tend to spend more time on online to escape from negative outcomes and social stress due to face-face interactions.

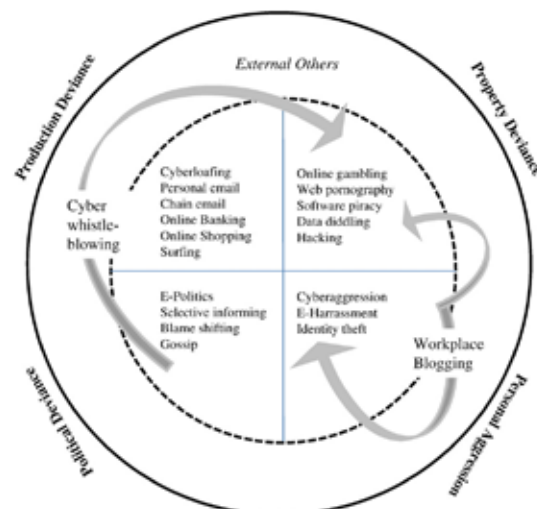
Cyber deviancy:

In order to describe the nature of Counterproductive or deviant use of technology behaviors, Weatherbee and Kelloway (2006) decided to construct a framework to incorporate ICT effect. They grouped the technology misuse under an umbrella term known as cyberdeviance. Robinson and Bennett's (1995) in one of their typology stated that, the cyberdeviancy framework acknowledges that there exist a significant difference between deviant behaviours that are expressed with ICTs and other forms of deviant or counterproductive workplace behaviours (Mastrangelo et al., 2006). Originally Deviant behaviour is classified into major two category:

- Counterproductive behaviour towards Organization (CWB-O)
- Counterproductive behaviour towards Individuals (CWB-I)

Some of the terms used in referring to CWB are workplace deviant behavior (Robinson and Bennett, 1995), employee deviance (Warren, 2003), organizational misbehavior (Warren, 2003), and workplace incivility (Cortina, 2008). Robinson and Bennett, 1995, proposed that CWB can vary based on its target either organizational (CWB-O) or individual (CWB-I). CWB-O can be categorized into property CWB and production CWB (Mikulay et al., 2001) while CWB-I is categorized as political deviance and personal aggression.

The behavior towards organization include taking long coffee breaks, absenteeism, theft, sabotage, poor quality, working slow, leaving early etc and the behavior towards individuals include favoritism, abusing, sexual harassment, gossips etc. The above diagram demonstrates that the deviant behaviour is classified in to 4 quadrants and the various technology misuses are classified according to the quadrants. Out of these the online banking, internet surfing, online shopping has been situated in **production deviance** quadrant. Cyberaggression which is a verbal face-to-face aggression is situated in **personal aggression** quadrant. Online gambling, web pornography and hacking are situated in **property deviance** quadrant. E-gossiping, selective informing tends to lie in **political deviance** quadrant.



Cyberdeviancy Typology

Source: Adapted from Robinson and Bennett(1995) & Weatherbee and Kelloway (2006)

Workplace blogging- releasing internal emails to the public may be seen to have potential outcomes of both **property deviance and personal aggression**. The ICT misuse in workplace is predicted to spread vigorously among the employees and its consequences can direct the organization to lose its reputation, its employees and confidential information.

Approaches on technology and counterproductive work behavior:

Computer misuse is not restricted to individual level but also beyond that. Unlike other counterproductive work behaviours which, if exhibited by an individual affects the organization as a whole. The ICT misuse varies at different levels from technical, managerial, organizational and psychological. There are many approaches for the study on counterproductive use of technology with different terminology and definitions. Some of them forms on non-work related use of information and communication technology in workplace are:

- Cyberloafing
- Cyberslacking
- Cyberaggression

The concept of Cyberslacking describes the behaviours which include online gambling, stock trading, online banking, online chats, or even visiting pornographic websites. Cyberloafing describes the behaviours based on the use of organizational internet or emails. Cyberloafing generally means being always on the web at work doing non-work-related activities. Studies prove that 60 to 80 percent of the time workers spend on the Internet in the workplace is spent doing things that have nothing to do with work. Some elements between these two approaches may be similar but not the same. These are basically into two main constructs namely Non-work related internet surfing and incorporating personal emails use. Blau, Yang and Ward cook (2006) quoted that cyberloafing comprised of three factors namely: internet surfing or browsing, non-work related use of emails and the third is one required a higher degree of interactivity (e.g. Online gaming). These misuse can lead to illegal software downloading, distribution of videos, exposing the other system of the firms to viruses while internet surfing. According to Johnson and Kupla (2007) online behaviours are separable based on their degree of usage and degree of interactivity.

Either little or highly risky these behaviours cause a loss to the organizations productivity that is when an employee engage himself on his personal online banking during working hours or use organizations recourses for his personal emails or for updating his personal blogs on social media. Cyberaggression is one such term that denotes the usage of workplace email intentionally for expressing aggression. The minor misuse of technology in the form Cyberaggression may lead in to a severe problem. These forms create a serious problem and lies in the personal aggression quadrant of the Cyberdeviancy Typology. Studies also prove that cyberaggression holds well with other forms of workplace aggression. The ease of use and simplicity of these technologies allows individuals to post information concerning their work online. This publically available information creates interpersonal conflicts at work along with negative comments about the whole entity. This can grow up to publically passing humorous jokes or racial comments on the co-worker and the supervisor.

How to control Internet misuse:

Employees browsing the web during working hours are not just a productivity issue; such employees might download illegal music and/or software or visit disreputable sites which will try to infect their visitors with Trojans.. However, there are a variety of ways to handle cyber slacking within an organization:

- Allowing a certain amount of (monitored) online recreation can enhance many workplaces and ultimately make employees more productive.
- Establish policies around the use of the Internet and email and make the employees aware that they are monitored and reported on their internet usage.
- Management can also create a list of sites that are acceptable to visit during work hours.
- Create a punishment policy.
- Tools can be employed to monitor the internet activity of employees. Reports can then give an accurate picture of what sites an employee has visited and how much time the employee spent browsing.
- Setting up policies that would always block malicious sites but allow access to news, social networking and gaming sites during the employees' break would secure the business against security threats, prevent cyber slacking.

Future Directions:

Counterproductive work behavior has always been an area of interest for practitioners, corporate players and academicians. Many executives, administrators, and Researchers see unethical behavior as cancer that is working on organizations. Deviant behavior of employees at all levels of the organization is very alarming. Though there are several studies concentrating on the antecedents and consequences of these workplace deviances, empirical research has always been a lagged phenomenon. It is found that individuals who were aware that their co-worker tend to engage in these behaviors, were more likely to engage themselves in these behaviors. In similar veins, perception of fairness and unfairness in the organizations also been found relating to ICT misuse. Further studies can concentrate upon the empirical research to prove the significant difference between the gender, age, experience factors influencing the ICT misuse. Also studies can focus on what are the driving factors that influence an employee for ICT misuse. Today use of ICT has become indispensable in any organizations. So researchers and corporate players should take necessary steps to eliminate completely or reduce the counterproductive use of technology.

Discussion:

Society is growing well on its way towards a technology enabled work environment where the individuals use technology for both personal and business communications. As technology penetrates deeper into the work there are ample chances for the information and communication management to collapse. From an employer perspective if an employer wishes to allow free access to the Internet it is recommended that they keep an eye on their employees' Internet usage and take corrective measures when this goes beyond a certain acceptable threshold. Employees tend to use the same connectivity for both official and personal works. Some forms are emails, instant messaging, Voice of internet protocol (VOIP), facebook, twitter, etc. A survey conducted by Aducci et.al., 2008 states that currently 40% of global workforce use technology and referred to as hyper-connected. It also has potential to rise within a couple of years. Therefore, it is recommended to the organization that they should minimize the effects of Counterproductive workplace behavior especially CWB-O and cultivate positive behaviors among their employees in their organization. It is also observed that the Deviant workplace behavior has a strong effect on individual performance. The ease of access to use ICTs at work means that it will continue to be present among employees directing towards counterproductive work behavior.

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