
The Organizational Conditions Impacting on Employees' Perception of Counter-Ecological Behaviors

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Abstract:

Purpose: Determination of the influence of organizational conditions on employees' perception of counter-ecological behaviors.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The research was conducted between 15 July and 15 August 2019, using the online questionnaire (computer-assisted web interviewing). The material which was collected was subject to statistical analysis.

Findings: Statistically significant dependencies ($p < 0.05$) were found between organizational conditions and employees' perception of counter-ecological behaviors.

Practical Implications: It is recommended to establish the following: first – whether there exist significant dependences between promoting/discriminating pro-ecological attitudes in the organization and employees' perception of counter-ecological behaviors; second – whether there exist significant interdependences between promoting/discriminating counter-ecological attitudes in the organization and employees' perception of counter-ecological behaviors, and third - how strong the correlations are between employees' perception of counter-ecological behaviors and their behaviors concerning the protection of the natural environment.

Originality/Value: So far, no attempts have been made at examining the impact of organizational conditions on employees' perception of counter-ecological behaviors.

Keywords: Counter-ecological behaviors, organizational conditions, employees' perception.

JEL classification: D22, J81, L29, Q59.

Paper Type: Research study.

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1. Introduction

Today's companies have to overcome numerous challenges posed by the globalization process. These organizations, which successfully move with the times regarding their activity, cannot remain indifferent towards the changing environmental needs of societies. As a result, the attitudes which the group of the highest managerial rung represents, yet also organizational conditions which they create for their inferiors, decide about the approach of the whole company towards ecology. This can be severe or disrespectful, pro-ecological or counter-ecological an attitude.

Knowledge shapes the system of ecological values of the whole organization, influencing the perception and behavior towards the natural environment. The system of ecological values forms ecological consciousness that is the foundation of employees' pro-ecological attitudes (Seroka-Stoka, 2012). These attitudes inspire the organization to raise the level of ecological culture as readiness for people's relevant actions and behaviors, displaying respect for nature. Ecological culture is based on the conviction that the natural environment enables humanity to exist and develop and that the harmony between man and nature is indispensable (Huczek, 1999).

All operating factors form ecological consciousness, i.e., psychological and social, organizational, and economical since their joint operation leads to pro-ecological attitudes and behaviors (Kramer *et al.*, 2005). The range of owners managers ecological consciousness can – to a large extent – decide about the activity of companies in shaping the responsibility for the environment (Seroka-Stolka, 2012). In the opinion of Tilley (1999), a high level of ecological knowledge and consciousness, unfortunately, does not guarantee pro-ecological behaviors, since very often there exists a 'gap' between the pro-ecological attitude and the pro-ecological behavior. Similar study results were obtained by Nemcsicsne Zsóka (2008), who conducted her research in Hungarian companies, where pro-ecological attitudes presented by the management did not always lead to pro-ecological behaviors of their companies.

Considering the above-mentioned 'gap' between the pro-ecological attitude and the pro-ecological behavior of people, one can risk making the statement that there is no possibility of completely excluding the occurrence of counter-ecological behaviors in enterprises, despite clear manifestations of pro-ecological attitudes that are present in them. Given the above establishments, the following questions should be asked: What is the relation between the influence exerted by the work environment, to put it more precisely – one between the impact of organizational conditions – and the employees' perception of counter-ecological behaviors? Is, in favorable organizational conditions, the workers' attitude towards eventually occurring counter-ecological behaviors (which cannot be excluded as assumed above) highly negative/critical? Do the organizational conditions that hamper workers' everyday duties cause the (frustrated) employees not to regard counter-ecological behaviors as unfavorable. In the light of the above-formulated questions that require tackling, it is interesting – in the authors' opinion – to search for relations between various organizational factors and the

employees' perception of counter-ecological behaviors. The literature analysis on the subject also proved that no attempt had been made to investigate the influence of organizational conditions on the perception of counter-ecological behaviors. Thus, examining this dependence makes the primary aim of this study, which the authors embarked on accomplishing.

2. Organizational Factors and their Impact on Organizational Behaviors

From the scientific literature, employees' behaviors in work are greatly influenced by their traits, conditioned, among others, by their personality construction, attitudes or habits, and experiences acquired earlier. In turn, primarily, a significant impact on the formation of habits and experiences is exerted by the so-called working environment (Forehand and Von Haller, 1964; Hersey *et al.*, 2001).

Organizational behaviors result from the personality of the given work and the surrounding in which the behavior has occurred. Because there are differences between people and various situations in which employees function in their working environments, it is usually hard to foresee their behavior (Hersey *et al.*, 2001; Robbins and Judge, 2019). As it was mentioned earlier, the attitudes of the same person can differ from their behaviors. The situation becomes even more complicated when we realize how the employee behaves determined by how they perceive the situation in which they found themselves. It can be supposed, too, that favorable conditions of the work environment will positively influence the employee's behavior and – developing it further – an appropriate/critical evaluation of behaviors perceived by the employee in the workplace:

- Hence, it is justifiable to look at the critical organizational factors that influence employees' behaviors in the workplace. They include the following:
- properties of the workplace,
- broadly conceived organizational support, e.g., behaviors of superiors (the skill of setting goals, manifesting positive behaviors, etc.), organizational policy (remuneration system, social package, career paths, promotion of pro-ecological attitudes, etc.), the created team atmosphere (inclination towards cooperation or rivalry, advocating positive behaviors among co-workers, etc.).

The influence which is not without significance on employees' behaviors, or perception of organizational behaviors, can be exerted by conditions of material environment, such as noise. The sphere which is affected by noise is not only the hearing organ, but also vegetative functions. Upon exceeding certain norms (noise levels above 95 decibels), reactions of the organisms are not appropriate, they become pathological. In consequence, there may develop multiple psychosomatic disorders (Jarosz, 2014).

In the opinion of Jarosz (2014), the pay is of greatest significance to employees, then the sense of safety, colleagues, inner satisfaction with work and the degree of sense of self-dependence. The conditions of working environment play a considerable role in shaping desired employees' behaviors, which in consequence translates into the feeling of comfort while carrying out concrete tasks in connection with the function held.

According to other authors (Przybyła, 1993), such organizational factors as:

- 1) organizational structures and their attributes, i.e., slenderness, range of management, span of management, degree of specialization,
- 2) processes,
- 3) degree of formalization, including tasks, duties, and entitlements,
- 4) resources, including the social capital,
- 5) standardization, including the system of environmental management in compliance with ISO 14001 standard, etc., through its ordering role that impacts the results of work and the whole of the organization, influence the employees' manifestations of positive organizational behaviors. It can be thus supposed that all deviations of dysfunctions occurring within the above-indicated organizational conditions can impact on manifestation of negative behaviors and – to follow the reasoning further – an uncritical evaluation of negative behaviors perceived by employees in the workplace, or indeed – encourage to manifest them.

It follows from the scientific literature that organizing as a function of managing, as well as structures that order organizations are an indispensable requirement of each subject realizing defined tasks, within the framework of which workers come to function. The level of intensification of formalisms influences the attitudes of the workers in the company; nevertheless, the degree of organizational support is of key significance in this case (Miroński and Czaplińska, 2010).

2.1 Climate and Organizational Support

Effectively functioning organizations expect their employees to have greater involvement in improving work productivity, undertaking – actions aimed at raising quality and saving the environment, reaching beyond routine commitments, etc. All this is possible to attain in a favorable working environment. In turn, a friendly working environment is one whose vital element is a suitable organizational climate. Research points to a positive correlation between the workplace's organizational climate and positive behaviors, including also OCB. Among the factors of the organizational climate, which are of importance to positive behaviors, including altruistic ones, one needs to distinguish: support from the superiors, employees' autonomy, affluence (suitable conditions of pay), the superiors' taking into consideration feedback from their inferiors, as well as employees' participation, that is empowerment (Chao-Chan and Na-Ting, 2014; Randhawa and Kaur, 2015).

The organizational climate, which is a mark of culture, can be palpable, felt subjective since it is connected with the atmosphere present in interpersonal contacts. It also extends over the sphere of perceptions (Bogusz, 2000) and manifests itself in the sense of organizational justice, support from the very organization itself, exerting a considerable influence on the manifestation of positive behaviors in the organization. In turn, organizational support plays a mediator in organizational justice and climate (Li *et al.*, 2017).

A proper organizational climate is dependent on the form of supervision on the part of managers, which ought to include the component of support (Qadeer and Jaffery, 2014). Supervision that line workers positively receive in the atmosphere of support from their immediate superiors favors positive organizational behaviors. Moreover, the very support itself is the interactive, stimulating character that excites towards displaying these behaviors, including OCB and superiors (Tang and Tsaur, 2016).

It also follows from the studies that there might be various co-dependences connected with organizational culture and support, whereas their interpretation is often dependent on situational factors and the type of organization. On the other hand, it has been confirmed that personality formation is possible in suitable psychosocial and organizational conditions founded primarily on the climate of support (Organ and Lingl, 1995; Van Scotter and Motowidlo, 1996; Afsar and Badir, 2016). Accordingly, a lack of support from superiors poses the most severe barrier to employees' engaging in environmental behaviors (Zibarras and Ballinger, 2011).

2.2 Environmental Workplace Behaviors

Over several recent years, a series of studies have been conducted on individual behaviors showing care for natural workplace environment (Boiral, 2009; Ciocirlan and Pettersson, 2012; DuBois *et al.*, 2013; Robertson and Barling, 2013). Ciocirlan (2017) defines Environmental Workplace Behaviors (EWBs) as ones present at work and directed towards protecting or improving the natural environment, which can but do not have to generate value for the organization. Workers can display these behaviors on any organizational level. In the opinion of this researcher, EWBs include organization citizenship behaviors for the environment (OCBEs), environmental in-role behaviors (EIRBs), and environmental counterproductive workplace behaviors (ECWBs).

Part of the relevant literature dealing with pro-ecological behaviors in organizations is based on the social exchange theory (SET), whose central assumption is reciprocity following between the employee and the organization (Paillé *et al.*, 2013; Paillé and Mejía-Morelos, 2014). According to the SET, if the employee knows that protection of the environment is among the employer's primary goals and if he/she feels supported by their organization, he/she is more inclined towards engaging in pro-ecological behaviors in order to return the benefits they receive (Paillé and Mejía-Morelos, 2014). If the environmental values held by the employee comply with those

adhered to by the organization, the reciprocity mentioned above principle between the employee and the organization can play a principal role since the worker can aid the organization's efforts in the sphere of environmental protection (Delmas and Burbano, 2011).

Study results reveal that the so-called 'green workers' (ecologically-minded employees) are not able to engage in EWB activities at work because of, for instance, a lack of autonomy, lack of support from their superiors (Zibarras and Ballinger, 2011), or also because of bureaucratic obstacles (DuBois *et al.*, 2013). In such cases, there can simultaneously co-occur in the worker inconsistencies between two components of his/her attitude towards the protection of the environment, is cognitive ("I believe that nature should be protected.") and behavioral ("I am not able to perform my duties at work in an ecological way."). This inconsistency is defined as "cognitive dissonance" and creates tension within the individual, including them weakening their initial attitude (Festinger, 1957).

Taking into account, firstly, that the attitudes of one man can differ from his/her behaviors; secondly, that man strives to attain an inner balance through diminishing the cognitive dissonance, and lastly, that man's behavior is determined by the way he/she perceives the situation which they have found themselves in, it can be assumed that favorable conditions created in the working environment will exert an influence on the employee's critical perception of behaviors in the place of work. Developing this reasoning, one can risk the statement that favorable conditions of the working environment and the critical perception of organizational behaviors by the worker, including counter-ecological ones, will positively impact both the pro-environmental attitude and pro-environmental behavior of this employee. Moreover, the other way round – unfavorable conditions in the working environment and a lack of the worker's critical perception of organizational behaviors, including counter-ecological ones, will negatively influence pro-environmental attitude and pro-environmental behavior displayed by this employee.

Concerning the above considerations, the following hypothesis was formulated:

Hypothesis 1: It is assumed that there appear significant interdependences between organizational conditions and the perception of counter-ecological behaviors.

3. Research Methodology

The diagnostic survey among students of WSB University in Opole was used. The survey was carried out between 15 July and 15 August 2019. The request to fill in the online questionnaire was addressed to students in employment representing small and medium-sized companies. The scale constructed for the needs of the studies consists of 14 questions (Q1-Q14) relating to the evaluation of counter-ecological behaviors and ten questions (M1-M10) dealing with organizational conditions.

How harmful, in your opinion, is the behavior of people who – in your workplace do the following:

- 1) waste food? (Q1)
- 2) use up more materials than necessary? (Q2)
- 3) purposefully make the workplace dirty? (Q3)
- 4) leave light on in unused rooms? (Q4)
- 5) use old-fashioned non-energy-efficient electric bulbs? (Q5)
- 6) make use of old-fashioned non-energy-efficient appliances? (Q6)
- 7) overuse the stand-by mode of (household) appliances (instead of switching them off completely)? (Q7)
- 8) do not segregate rubbish? (Q8)
- 9) burn leaves, grass, tree branches? (Q9)
- 10) burn garbage? (Q10)
- 11) dispose of garbage in forests, illegally drop rubbish at 'wild' dumps or landfills, pour hazardous waste into the sewage? (Q11)
- 12) use disposable ballpens? (Q12)
- 13) use plastic cutlery, Styrofoam, or plastic containers to keep food, cups, etc.? (Q13)
- 14) do not report problems and instances of abuse of environment, which they have noticed in the workplace? (Q14).

The questions connected with organizational conditions were as follows:

- 1) Do you expect the direct superior to determine the ways of realizing individual tasks? (M1)
- 2) Are the current organizational conditions conducive, in your opinion, to the development of social bonds (strong positive relations between the workers)? (M2)
- 3) Do you trust direct superiors? (M3)
- 4) Do you trust other superiors (not the direct ones)? (M4)
- 5) Do you trust your colleagues? (M5)
- 6) Does the work environment, in which you are functioning, facilitate undertaking independent decisions (relating to professional and social matters)? (M6)
- 7) Does the current work environment create the possibility of free expressing your views on pro-ecological actions and ones detrimental to the environment? (M7)
- 8) Is the freedom of your taking decisions connected with the realization of professional duties restricted by procedures (formalisms)? (M8)
- 9) Is there a possibility of independent taking most of the decisions in your workplace? (M9)
- 10) Is there a possibility of choosing variants of realization of tasks in your workplace, which would consider pro-ecological actions? (M10).

In the case of questions Q1-Q14, the respondents chose their answers using an 11-point scale (where 0 – I do not perceive the behavior as unfavorable, 10 – I qualify the behavior as negative). The higher the result on the scale, the more negative the evaluation of the behavior. For the needs of carrying out the independence test, a division into three categories was made in dependence on the obtained result: the assessment is not negative (0-4), hard to say (5-7), the assessment is negative (8-10). In the case of questions M1-M10, the respondents were choosing an answer using a 7-point scale (Decidedly yes / Yes / Rather yes / Hard to say / Rather not / No / Decidedly not). To verify the hypothesis, the chi-square independence test was used. A statistical analysis of data was performed with the use of the Statistica package.

4. Results and Discussion

The applied survey covered 342 students of WSB University in Opole. The respondents (262 women and 80 men) were in employment (representatives of small and medium-sized companies), at different ages and varying lengths of employment. Nearly 60% of the questioned declared over five years of work experience.

Based on the primary data analysis, it was found that there existed statistically significant dependencies ($p < 0.05$) between organizational conditions and perception by workers of counter-ecological behaviors (Table 1). Among 140 recorded p-values, 65% were significant ($p < 0.05$). Thus, the research hypothesis was proved to be valid.

Table 1. The chi-square independence test results (p-values)

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10
Q1	0.000	0.000	0.007	0.837	0.000	0.749	0.655	0.020	0.031	0.017
Q2	0.000	0.000	0.252	0.2788	0.036	0.189	0.017	0.009	0.310	0.121
Q3	0.000	0.000	0.441	0.058	0.002	0.472	0.681	0.002	0.005	0.002
Q4	0.000	0.003	0.249	0.001	0.094	0.368	0.062	0.098	0.014	0.001
Q5	0.014	0.075	0.009	0.130	0.516	0.139	0.042	0.038	0.027	0.006
Q6	0.015	0.002	0.041	0.023	0.567	0.094	0.014	0.049	0.019	0.000
Q7	0.121	0.037	0.089	0.003	0.000	0.015	0.004	0.085	0.000	0.000
Q8	0.009	0.001	0.041	0.030	0.034	0.117	0.005	0.719	0.108	0.010
Q9	0.011	0.000	0.272	0.210	0.000	0.004	0.216	0.000	0.019	0.107
Q10	0.000	0.000	0.064	0.196	0.000	0.123	0.903	0.000	0.149	0.000
Q11	0.000	0.000	0.005	0.009	0.000	0.009	0.000	0.026	0.002	0.001
Q12	0.582	0.208	0.143	0.010	0.001	0.130	0.072	0.4212	0.009	0.004
Q13	0.000	0.031	0.189	0.026	0.000	0.330	0.032	0.170	0.121	0.000
Q14	0.000	0.000	0.024	0.007	0.491	0.004	0.005	0.013	0.010	0.004

Source: Own study.

Statistically significant dependences occurred chiefly between the evaluation of negativism of counter-ecological behaviors and the following:

- expectations with reference to the direct superior,

- organizational conditions favoring the development of social bonds,
- possibility of choosing variants of realization of tasks in the workplace.

Tables 2-4 present distributions of the answers declared by the respondents, which illustrate the chosen dependencies between the negativism of lack of segregation of garbage and selected organizational conditions. The selection was purposeful since producing waste is an inseparable element of each organization's functioning. Waste is produced in connection with the activity run (production, service) and in workers' staying on the company's premises (package left after consuming food products, all sorts of bottles, etc.).

In the group of respondents who expect the superior to establish the manners of realization of individual tasks, 70% condemn the lack of segregation of garbage, while 24% do not. In turn, regarding the group of respondents who do not expect their superiors to determine how to carry out tasks, as many as 84% disapprove of the lack of segregation of garbage, whereas only 5% do not (Table 2). If we expect the superior to establish the manner of realizing tasks, we accept the indicated way to be appropriate at the same time. When, on the other hand, we do not expect the superior to set the way of carrying out tasks, then it is difficult to 'turn a blind eye' to improper conduct.

Table 2. Cross tabulation results (column percentages) of How negative, in your opinion, is the behavior of people who – in your workplace do not segregate rubbish? (Q8, rows) against Do you expect the direct superior to determine the ways of realizing individual tasks? (M1, columns)

	Yes	Hard to say	No
I do not perceive the behavior as negative	24%	24%	5%
Hard to say	6%	12%	11%
I qualify the behavior as negative	70%	64%	84%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Own study.

If the currently existing organizational conditions favor the development of social bonds, simultaneously counter-ecological behaviors in the workplace are perceived as less harmful (Table 3). Therefore, in the group of respondents representing organizations where the conditions are conducive to developing social bonds, 69.5% disapprove of garbage segregation.

In contrast, in the group of the questioned employed in organizations whose conditions do not secure this, 83.0% condemn the lack of garbage segregation. It seems that a member of the organization in which conditions favor the development of social liaisons puts the organization's interests above the good of the natural environment.

Table 3. Cross tabulation results (column percentages) of *How negative, in your opinion, is the behavior of people who – in your workplace do not segregate rubbish?* (Q8, rows) against *Are the current organizational conditions conducive, in your opinion, to the development of social bonds (strong positive relations between the workers)?* (M2, columns)

	Yes	Hard to say	No
I do not perceive the behavior as negative	25.7%	26.9%	6.8%
Hard to say	4.8%	13.4%	10.2%
I qualify the behavior as negative	69.5%	59.7%	83.0%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Own study.

If there is the possibility of choosing variants of realization of tasks in the workplace, which considers pro-ecological actions, then – simultaneously – counter-ecological behaviors in the workplace are evaluated as less critical (Table 4). Thus, in the group of respondents from organizations where there is the possibility of choosing variants of realization of tasks, 75.6% of the interviewed condemn the lack of segregation of garbage, whereas in the group of respondents employed in organizations where there are no such possibilities, as many as 80.5% of the questioned do not approve of the lack of segregation.

Table 4. Cross tabulation results (column percentages) of *How negative, in your opinion, is the behavior of people who – in your workplace do not segregate rubbish?* (Q8, rows) against *Is there a possibility of choosing variants of realization of tasks in your workplace, which would take into account pro-ecological actions?* (M10, columns)

	Yes	Hard to say	No
I do not perceive the behavior as negative	15.6%	30.0%	15.6%
Hard to say	8.8%	9.2%	3.9%
I qualify the behavior as negative	75.6%	60.8%	80.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Own study.

The existing organizational conditions determine the evaluation of the behavior of persons who do not segregate garbage in their workplace. It is worth mentioning that people who were not able to assess the organizational conditions displayed at the same time the lowest level of disapproval of the studied counter-productive behaviors.

5. Conclusion

The research results confirm statistically significant dependencies between organizational conditions and employees' perception of counter-ecological behaviors. They allow supposing that organizations, while striving to create a positive image, should take account of the specifics of the organization, including – first and foremost – aspects connected with expectations towards the direct superior, organizational conditions conducive to the development of social bonds as well as the possibility of

choosing variants of realization of tasks in the workplace. These conditions exert an influence on condemning by a decisive majority of respondents of counter-ecological behaviors, independent of whether there is a possibility of choosing by them variants of realization of tasks in the workplace, which takes into account pro-ecological actions or there is no such possibility. Here, Ken Blanchard's theory of situational leadership finds its confirmation. That author argues that each employee remains at a different stage of professional development and, in connection with it – requires taking an individual approach. A worker – depending on the level of his/her professional development – has specific needs (different on each level, that is, requires instructions and support on a different level). If the above-mentioned organizational conditions are suitably adjusted to the level of the worker's development, then it is possible to define them as favorable to the worker. The research confirmed that the attitude of the decisive majority of respondents to the occurring counter-ecological behaviors is highly critical in such conditions.

The conducted analyses of the study results are initial and need deepening. Accordingly, it is recommended to be established. There are significant interdependences between promotion/discrimination of pro-ecological attitudes in organizations and the employees' perception of counter-ecological behaviors.

1. There are significant interdependences between promotion/discrimination of counter-ecological approaches in organizations and the employees' perception of counter-ecological behaviors.
2. How strong the correlations are between the employees' perception of counter-ecological behaviors and their behaviors in the sphere of natural environment protection.

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