
Perceived Organizational Attitudes Toward Counterproductive Work Behaviors Across Culture Types: Insights From the OCAI Framework

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Abstract:

Purpose: The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between organisational culture type (as defined by the OCAI model) and perceived organisational attitudes towards counterproductive work behaviours (CWB). Particular attention is given to three dimensions of organisational responses: the use of sanctions, tolerance, and encouragement of counterproductive behaviours.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The study is based on survey data collected from employees representing organisations characterised by different culture types (clan, adhocracy, market, hierarchy). Statistical analysis was conducted using the Kruskal-Wallis test and post hoc analyses to assess differences in organisational attitudes towards CWB.

Findings: The results indicate that organisational culture type significantly differentiates the levels of tolerance and encouragement of CWB. No significant differences were observed regarding the use of sanctions, which may suggest the existence of a universal accountability mechanism for counterproductive behaviours.

Practical Implications: Organisations should adapt their CWB prevention systems to the specific profile of their organisational culture, especially in structures focused on efficiency and formalism, where ethical norms may be marginalised. Strengthening ethical leadership and fostering coherent cultural values may reduce the risk of tolerating or promoting unethical conduct.

Originality/Value: The originality of this study lies in its integration of the OCAI typology of organisational cultures with employees' perceptions of three specific organisational reactions to CWB: sanctioning, tolerating, and encouraging. Unlike previous research that has focused on formal ethical codes or policy declarations, this study explores informal and subjectively perceived cultural signals that may either foster or inhibit counterproductive behaviours. This approach contributes a novel perspective to the field of organisational ethics and workplace culture research.

Keywords: Organisational behaviour, organisational culture profiles, prevention.

JEL codes: M14, J59, L29.

Paper type: Research article.

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1. Introduction

Counterproductive work behaviours (CWB) represent a significant research issue within the field of management studies, as they can adversely affect organisational performance, team climate, and employee well-being. CWBs encompass a broad range of actions that contravene organisational norms – from minor transgressions to severe misconduct, such as sabotage, theft, or psychological abuse (Robinson and Bennett, 1995; Bennett and Robinson, 2000).

Previous studies suggest that CWBs are multifactorial in nature, with their occurrence linked to both individual characteristics (e.g., personality traits, stress, burnout) and structural or cultural factors within the organisation (Spector *et al.*, 2006; Dalal, 2005; Mayer *et al.*, 2010).

The influence of organisational culture on employee functioning – including attitudes towards undesirable behaviours – has attracted increasing scholarly attention (Martin and Cullen, 2006). Organisational culture, understood as a system of dominant values, norms, and behavioural patterns (Schein, 2010), may serve a regulatory function by delineating what is considered acceptable within the organisation.

In this sense, culture may either support the prevention of CWBs or, conversely, foster an environment in which such behaviours are tolerated, overlooked, or fail to elicit a clear organisational response (Kaptein, 2008; Treviño *et al.*, 2006).

The impact of organisational culture on employee behaviour is not always direct, nor fully recognised by members of the organisation. It may manifest through informal behavioural patterns, implicit expectations, a lack of clear normative communication, or inconsistencies between declared values and managerial practices (Treviño *et al.*, 2006; Schein, 2010; Kaptein, 2008). Such discrepancies can result in what is referred to as “ethical ambivalence” – a condition in which employees are uncertain whether specific behaviours are truly acceptable (Palanski *et al.*, 2010).

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between organisational culture type (according to the OCAI model) and employees’ perceptions of organisational attitudes towards CWB. Crucially, the study focuses not on an objective assessment of organisational policies but on the subjective perceptions of respondents – specifically, whether they perceive their workplace as (1) applying sanctions against CWB, (2) tolerating such behaviours, or (3) encouraging them.

Respondents were not asked to identify specific sources of these attitudes (e.g., management, supervisors, colleagues); rather, the questions referred to the overall perception of the organisation as a cultural environment.

Drawing on the OCAI typology of organisational cultures (Cameron and Quinn,

2011), the study seeks to determine whether and how the cultural profile of an organisation influences the perceived organisational attitudes towards CWB.

The analysis is based on data gathered from employees representing four types of organisational cultures: Clan, Adhocracy, Market, and Hierarchy. The findings may enhance our understanding of how different cultural patterns relate to perceived organisational responses to counterproductive behaviours – regardless of formally established ethical policies.

In this article, the term organisational attitudes is used to denote the way in which the organisation – understood as a cultural system – is perceived by employees in the context of CWB, irrespective of whether these actions originate from top management, direct supervisors, or are embedded in organisational norms.

2. Literature Review

Counterproductive work behaviours are defined as employee actions that violate organisational norms and cause harm to the organisation or its members. The classical typology proposed by Robinson and Bennett (1995) distinguishes two primary forms: CWB-O (organisational) and CWB-I (interpersonal).

More recent studies (Gruys and Sackett, 2003; Marcus and Schuler, 2004), however, suggest a more complex structure, including such dimensions as work inefficiency, resource misuse, and destructive behaviours directed at the organisation. The occurrence of CWBs can be influenced by numerous factors – ranging from personality traits, stress levels, and occupational burnout, to subjective perceptions of injustice (Dalal, 2005; Spector *et al.*, 2006).

In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to the organisational context, particularly to organisational culture. Culture is understood as a set of dominant values, norms, and informal rules that shape the everyday functioning of the organisation (Schein, 2010). Its influence may manifest in the formation of expectations regarding employee behaviour as well as in managerial practices – for example, in the application of sanctions or the tolerance of behaviours that deviate from organisational values (Kaptein, 2008; Treviño *et al.*, 2006).

A systematic review by Bujang *et al.* (2024) indicates that the relationship between organisational culture and deviant behaviour has been studied across various sectors and national contexts. However, many of these studies have focused on broader constructs such as value congruence, ethical climate, or organisational trust – rather than on the analysis of perceived organisational attitudes towards CWB. This highlights the need for further in-depth research in this area.

In the OCAI model (Fernandes *et al.*, 2023, Cameron and Quinn, 2011), four fundamental types of organisational culture are distinguished: clan, adhocracy,

market, and hierarchy. Each of these reflects different organisational values as well as modes of operation for both leaders and employees. The characteristics of these types are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. *Typology of organisational cultures according to the OCAI model*

Culture type	Description
Clan	Organisations characterised by a clan culture are founded on strong interpersonal relationships, collaboration, and employee development. They place particular emphasis on community building and fostering partnerships between staff and clients. The primary objective of management is to support and engage the team.
Adhocracy	This type of culture promotes innovation, initiative, and creativity. Employees are encouraged to take risks, while leaders act as visionaries and agents of change. Core values include experimentation and adaptability.
Market	Organisations characterised by a market culture are oriented towards performance, competition, and goal achievement. Leadership is based on efficiency and the attainment of results, while success is measured in terms of effectiveness and market position.
Hierarchy	Hierarchical cultures emphasise formality, control, and predictability. Work is carried out in accordance with established procedures, and leaders act as coordinators and supervisors. Stability and efficiency are the main priorities.

Source: *Author's elaboration based on Fernandes et al., (2023), Cameron and Quinn (2011).*

Research by Hung, Su, and Lou (2022) shows a negative correlation between the clan culture and the prevalence of CWB, which the authors attribute to high levels of cooperation and team identification. Similarly, the adhocracy culture – despite its emphasis on autonomy – may also inhibit CWB through the promotion of personal responsibility and ethical self-regulation (Mayer *et al.*, 2010).

The market culture, focused on performance and competition, may – under certain conditions – foster the instrumentalisation of ethical norms, particularly when CWBs are perceived as effective means to achieve goals (Kaptein, 2008). Conversely, the hierarchy culture, due to its formalised structure, may give rise to situations in which harmful behaviours are not formally sanctioned if they do not explicitly breach established procedures (Treviño and Nelson, 2021).

From a managerial perspective, it is important to consider not only the factors that may facilitate the occurrence of CWB but also employees' perceptions of organisational attitudes – understood as subjective assessments of whether, and how, the organisation responds to such behaviours. Colquitt *et al.* (2001) argue that the effectiveness of sanctions depends on their alignment with principles of procedural and interpersonal justice. When sanctions are perceived as unfair, they may lead to an escalation of CWB (Skarlicki and Folger, 1997).

Xu, Loi, and Lam (2022) point out that inconsistencies between declared values and managerial practices increase the risk of counterproductive behaviour.

Moreover, the absence of adequate organisational responses may be interpreted by employees as tacit approval or even a form of implicit encouragement – particularly in cultures heavily oriented towards performance and goal attainment (Treviño and Nelson, 2021). Analysing these dynamics in relation to the cultural profile of an organisation underscores the importance of research into the role of organisational culture in shaping an ethical work environment.

3. Research Methodology

The study was conducted using an anonymous online questionnaire, addressed to employees working in various organisations operating in Poland. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research and the voluntary nature of their participation. All data were processed in accordance with principles of anonymity and confidentiality. The survey was conducted in July 2021 via Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI).

A purposive sampling approach was employed to ensure the inclusion of respondents representing each of the four organisational culture types, as defined by the OCAI model. All survey questions referred to the respondents' current workplace, including the occurrence of CWB and the identification of the dominant organisational culture type according to the OCAI framework. Based on responses to the OCAI section, the dominant organisational culture in each respondent's workplace was determined.

The questionnaire was developed specifically for the purposes of this study. It included questions related to three aspects of organisational attitudes towards CWB:

- (1) the application of sanctions against individuals displaying counterproductive behaviours,
- (2) the tolerance of such behaviours,
- (3) encouragement to engage in them.

Respondents answered using a five-point Likert scale (ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”). Given the purposive sampling and the online format of the study, the results are exploratory in nature and cannot be generalised to the broader population of employees in Poland.

The following research questions were formulated to investigate potential differences in perceived organisational attitudes towards counterproductive work behaviours:

RQ1: Do organisational attitudes towards employees who engage in CWB vary

depending on the type of organisational culture?

RQ2: Does the level of tolerance for CWB differ across organisational culture types?

RQ3: Does the extent to which CWB is encouraged differ depending on organisational culture type?

In response to these research questions, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: The type of organisational culture differentiates organisational attitudes towards CWB.

H2: In clan cultures, the perceived use of sanctions against individuals engaging in CWB is higher than in market and hierarchical cultures.

H3: In market and hierarchical cultures, tolerance or encouragement of CWB is perceived to occur more frequently than in clan and adhocracy cultures.

Statistical analyses were conducted separately for each variable (sanctions, tolerance, encouragement). Box and whisker plots illustrate the distribution of the data by highlighting key summary statistics. The box represents the interquartile range (IQR), extending from the first quartile (Q_1) to the third quartile (Q_3), which encompasses the middle 50% of the dataset.

The horizontal line within the box denotes the median, while the mean is typically indicated by a cross. The whiskers extend from the edges of the box to the smallest and largest values within 1.5 times the IQR from the quartiles. Data points lying outside this range are considered outliers and are plotted individually. To assess whether there were statistically significant differences in organisational attitudes towards counterproductive work behaviour depending on culture type (clan, adhocracy, market, hierarchy), the Kruskal–Wallis test was employed.

The significance level was set at $\alpha=0.05$. Where the main test indicated significance ($p<0.05$), post hoc tests (mean rank comparisons) were conducted to identify specific differences between culture types. The analyses were performed using Statistica software.

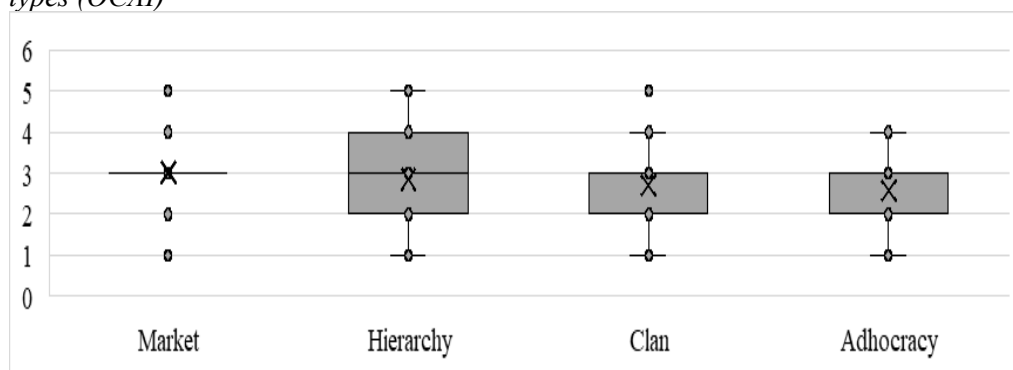
4. Research Results and Discussion

The research sample consisted of 385 individuals employed in various organisations. The majority of respondents were employees aged up to 38 years (65.7%) and individuals with secondary or higher education (a combined 93.2%). Women represented 60.3% of the sample. Over half of the participants had less than five years of tenure at their current place of employment. Most respondents (69.4%) did not hold managerial positions.

The distribution of respondents according to organisational culture type, identified using the OCAI model, was as follows: clan culture – 106 individuals, adhocracy – 93, market – 158, and hierarchy – 28.

Participants were asked whether sanctions are applied in their workplace towards individuals exhibiting counterproductive work behaviours. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ('definitely not') to 5 ('definitely yes'). The results of the analysis are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Perceived use of sanctions against CWB across organisational culture types (OCAI)



Source: Author's elaboration based on survey data (N=385).

The Kruskal-Wallis test for the perceived use of sanctions against employees engaging in counterproductive work behaviours (Figure 1) revealed no statistically significant differences between organisational culture types ($H=7.18$; $p=0.0664$). This suggests that regardless of whether an organisation exhibits a clan, adhocracy, market, or hierarchical culture, the perceived frequency of sanctions for CWB remains relatively similar.

The absence of significant differences may imply that organisational attitudes towards CWB possess a relatively universal character – i.e., responses to such behaviours are implemented irrespective of the organisation's dominant cultural profile. As highlighted in the literature, both formal (e.g., reprimands, demotions) and informal (e.g., ostracism, restricted access to information) sanctions are often perceived by employees as natural consequences of violating organisational norms, rather than as expressions of a specific cultural strategy (Bennett and Robinson, 2000).

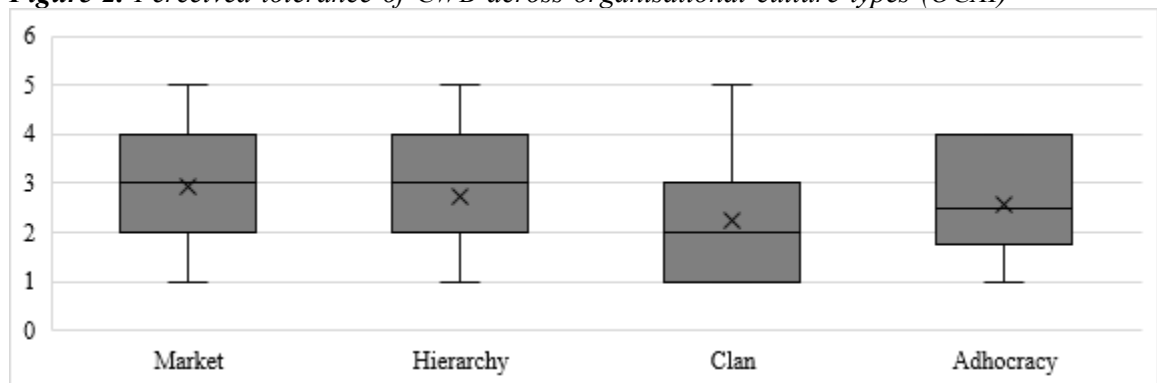
It may also be assumed that respondents do not always clearly distinguish between the type of sanction and the general perception of fairness in organisational actions, which could result in uniform assessments across culture types. According to organisational justice theory (Colquitt *et al.*, 2001), employees accept sanctions provided they are administered in accordance with clearly defined procedures and

principles – regardless of the dominant culture. From this perspective, the perception of sanctions may be more a function of procedural justice than of cultural orientation.

It is noteworthy, however, that the p-value obtained ($p=0.0664$) approaches the adopted significance threshold ($\alpha=0.05$), which may indicate the presence of potential differences that did not emerge clearly within the analysed sample. Future studies could benefit from a qualitative exploration of how sanctions are perceived and their relationship to perceived justice and the ethical climate within organisations (Treviño and Weaver, 2003).

In the next step, participants were asked about tolerance of counterproductive work behaviours. Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ('definitely not') to 5 ('definitely yes'). The results of the analysis are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Perceived tolerance of CWB across organisational culture types (OCAI)



Source: Author's elaboration based on survey data ($N=385$).

The Kruskal-Wallis test concerning perceived tolerance for CWB (Figure 2) revealed statistically significant differences between groups representing different organisational culture types ($H=25.50$; $p<0.001$). Post hoc analysis (mean rank comparisons) indicated significant differences between clan culture and both market culture and hierarchical culture. This suggests that in clan-type organisations, tolerance for counterproductive behaviours is perceived to be significantly lower than in market- and hierarchy-oriented organisations.

This interpretation aligns with the characteristics of the clan culture which, according to the OCAI model, is grounded in communal values, cooperation, trust, and strong interpersonal relationships (Cameron and Quinn, 2011). In such settings, behaviours that violate the community's well-being – such as sabotage, theft, or withdrawal from duties – are not only formally prohibited but also socially condemned. In accordance with normative social control theory (Hechter and Opp,

2001), strong internalisation of norms and mutual oversight mechanisms promote self-regulation among employees and reduce tolerance for CWB.

By contrast, market culture and hierarchical culture are respectively oriented towards performance and competition, and towards structure and formal rules. In market cultures, behaviours may be assessed primarily in terms of their effectiveness, which – as literature suggests – may result in the instrumentalisation of ethical norms and silent tolerance of unethical or counterproductive behaviours if perceived as aiding goal attainment.

Similarly, hierarchical cultures may foster procedural conformity, whereby non-productive behaviours are tolerated as long as formal rules are not breached, in the absence of effective informal mechanisms of social control (Treviño and Nelson, 2021).

These findings confirm that organisational culture type can influence the social norms that regulate tolerance for CWB, independent of formal anti-deviance policies. In relational cultures (clan, adhocracy), social opposition to harmful behaviours appears to be more prevalent, which may help mitigate tolerance for CWB.

In contrast, result- or structure-oriented cultures pose a greater risk of tolerating unethical behaviours, particularly if they do not directly conflict with measurable organisational objectives.

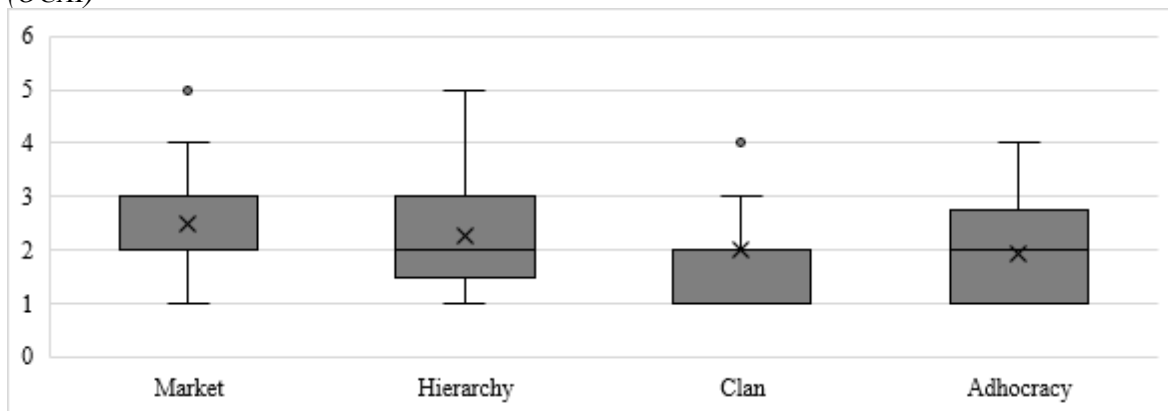
From a managerial perspective, this highlights the need to tailor supervisory systems, ethics frameworks, and organisational values to cultural profiles – particularly in market- and hierarchy-oriented organisations, where silent tolerance for CWB may go unnoticed but be systematically sustained. As Treviño and Nelson (2021) observe, effective prevention requires not only procedures but also a consistent cultural and ethical message within daily organisational interactions.

Participants were subsequently asked whether employees in their workplace are encouraged to engage in counterproductive work behaviours. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ('definitely not') to 5 ('definitely yes'). The results of this analysis are presented in Figure 3.

The Kruskal-Wallis test regarding perceived encouragement of CWB (Figure 3) showed statistically significant differences between the culture types ($H=20.73$; $p<0.001$). Mean rank comparisons revealed significant differences between clan culture and market culture, as well as between adhocracy and market culture.

This indicates that market-oriented organisations are more frequently perceived by employees as environments where encouragement of or greater social tolerance for counterproductive behaviour occurs, compared to clan or adhocracy cultures.

Figure 3. *Perceived encouragement of CWB across organisational culture types (OCAI)*



Source: *Author's elaboration based on survey data (N=385).*

This phenomenon may be partially explained by psychological and structural mechanisms embedded in the respective organisational cultures. Market culture, as defined by the competing values framework (OCAI), is externally oriented, focused on competition and performance pressure (Cameron and Quinn, 2011). In such environments, employees may internalise instrumental norms in which effectiveness and goal achievement override adherence to ethical standards. As Kaptein (2008) argues, a lack of a clear ethical value system in performance-driven cultures can lead to acceptance or even promotion of unethical practices, provided they benefit the organisation.

Conversely, clan culture prioritises collectivism, trust, and loyalty, with interpersonal collaboration and concern for the common good forming the basis of organisational relationships (Kaptein, 2008). In such a context, counterproductive behaviours are seen as violations of shared values and loyalty, making encouragement of such acts socially unacceptable and less likely to occur. Adhocracy – while flexible and innovation-oriented – also promotes autonomy, responsibility, and ethical self-regulation.

Research indicates that environments that foster development and creativity may discourage instrumental CWB, particularly if such behaviours undermine trust or the team's long-term objectives (Kaptein, 2008). In these organisations, ethical norms are often internalised within the team, rather than merely enforced externally, which reinforces self-regulation and reduces the need for formal sanctions.

These findings support the idea that organisational culture can influence not only tolerance of CWB but also the degree to which such behaviours are actively encouraged or discouraged. In cultures characterised by pressure for achievement and competition, unethical behaviours may be viewed as acceptable tools for delivering results – especially if sanctions or counter-norms are weak or absent

(Treviño and Nelson, 2021). These conclusions indicate the necessity of building robust ethical frameworks within market-oriented organisations – not only at the level of formal policies but also through everyday managerial practices. Organisations should promote ethical leadership, organisational justice, and clear boundaries of tolerance to reduce the likelihood of CWB being treated as a “justified” strategy.

Based on the statistical analyses conducted, Hypothesis H1 — which posited that the type of organisational culture differentiates attitudes towards counterproductive work behaviours — received partial support. Hypothesis H2, which predicted a higher level of sanctioning of CWB in clan cultures compared to market and hierarchical cultures, was not supported, as the observed differences did not reach statistical significance. In contrast, Hypothesis H3 was partially supported: the results indicated that both tolerance and encouragement of CWB were reported more frequently in market and hierarchical cultures than in clan and adhocracy cultures.

The most pronounced differences emerged between market-oriented and relational cultures, suggesting that an emphasis on outcomes and competition may contribute to greater acceptance of unethical conduct. Although not all hypotheses were fully confirmed, the findings provide clear evidence of the influence of organisational culture on specific dimensions of attitudes towards CWB.

This study presents several notable limitations that must be considered when interpreting the results:

- *Uneven group sizes:* The number of respondents within each organisational culture type (clan – 106, adhocracy – 93, market – 158, hierarchy – 28) was significantly varied. Particularly low representation of the hierarchical culture group may limit generalisability and reduce the statistical power of comparative analyses.
- *Lack of control for confounding variables:* The study did not account for potentially significant variables such as industry sector, organisation size, or employment structure, all of which may influence perceptions of organisational responses to CWB.
- *Simplification of the OCAI model:* Although widely used, the four-type classification may not fully capture the complexity of organisational culture, especially in cases of mixed or transitional cultural profiles.

Addressing the above limitations is essential for the proper interpretation of the findings and serves as a foundation for further, in-depth research. It should be emphasised that the present study was of a pilot nature and constituted an initial phase of a broader research project focusing on the relationship between organisational culture and attitudes towards counterproductive work behaviours. Its primary objective was to assess the validity of the research instruments, identify preliminary patterns, and explore potential methodological challenges.

The results obtained at this stage will inform the design of a full-scale study based on a more diverse sample, with the inclusion of contextual variables and extended statistical analyses.

Future research would benefit from employing mixed-method approaches that integrate quantitative data with qualitative insights (e.g., interviews, open-ended questions), enabling a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underpinning organisational attitudes towards CWB. A promising direction may also involve the use of longitudinal or experimental designs to capture temporal dynamics and potential causal relationships.

Supplementing self-report data with alternative sources (e.g., supervisor evaluations, internal documents) would facilitate triangulation and allow for a comparison between declared attitudes and actual organisational practices. Consideration should also be given to the application of advanced statistical techniques, such as structural equation modelling (SEM) or hierarchical models, to account for the complexity of organisational context.

5. Conclusions

In summary, it can be concluded that the type of organisational culture has a significant influence on perceived attitudes towards counterproductive work behaviours, although this influence is not uniform across all dimensions examined.

The application of sanctions against employees engaging in CWB does not significantly differ across culture types, which may suggest that organisations, regardless of cultural profile, implement similar mechanisms of formal and informal accountability.

The situation differs in relation to tolerance and encouragement of CWB, where statistically significant differences were observed. Organisations characterised by a clan or adhocracy culture demonstrate lower levels of tolerance and are less frequently perceived as environments in which such behaviours are encouraged. In contrast, market- and hierarchy-oriented cultures – likely due to their strong emphasis on performance or formalism – may lack the social norms necessary to effectively limit counterproductive behaviours.

These findings carry important implications for managerial practice, highlighting the need to adapt CWB prevention systems to the specific characteristics of the organisational culture, particularly in structures oriented towards outcomes or formal procedures, where ethical norms may be marginalised.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the study: reliance on self-reported data, lack of verification of actual organisational practices, and the exclusion of subcultures that may coexist with the dominant culture. Despite

these limitations, the findings offer a valuable contribution to the understanding of cultural determinants of organisational responsiveness to CWB and may serve as a starting point for further, in-depth qualitative analyses and inter-organisational comparisons.

The principal cognitive value of this study lies in its identification of cultural conditions under which CWB may not only be tolerated but even socially accepted or reinforced – from the employees' perspective. By combining the OCAI model with three dimensions of organisational reactivity, the study reveals subtle cultural mechanisms that extend beyond formal ethical standards and organisational policies. This approach enriches the current understanding of the role of culture in shaping behavioural norms in the workplace.

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