

ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE AND GOVERNANCE: REDUCING COUNTERPRODUCTIVE WORK BEHAVIOR THROUGH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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Abstract

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This study investigates counterproductive work behavior (CWB) in organizations through a systematic literature review of 61 articles published between 2014 and 2024, following Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to ensure methodological rigor. Thematic and hypothesis network analyses were employed to identify key factors contributing to CWB. The main findings indicate that distributive and procedural justice and personality traits such as neuroticism and emotional stability are significant predictors of CWB. This study provides a novel contribution by highlighting the critical role of daily interactions between supervisors and subordinates in shaping justice perceptions and moderating employees' emotional responses. Practical steps recommended for organizations include equitable resource distribution, transparent decision-making processes, and enhanced communication between supervisors and employees. Emotional intelligence training for supervisors can further help reduce negative emotional responses and mitigate the risk of CWB. Moreover, this study encourages exploring cross-cultural perspectives to better understand how cultural differences influence justice perceptions and engagement in CWB across diverse workplace environments.

Keywords: Counterproductive Work Behavior, Organizational Justice, Emotional Intelligence, Personality Traits, Workplace Interactions, Systematic Literature Review

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1. INTRODUCTION

Employees who engage in counterproductive work behavior (CWB) are intentionally causing harm to the organization or its members. CWB can range from small activities like abusing working time to more significant ones like sabotage, theft, and physical or verbal aggression (Na-Nan et al., 2020). CWB affects not just productivity, but also employee relationships, as well as psychological and physical well-being at work (Zhao et al., 2022).

Building on this understanding research on CWB has explored various individual and environmental factors contributing to its occurrence. Personality, negative emotions, and personal drive have all been linked to increased employee involvement in CWB (Na-Nan et al., 2020). Furthermore, working factors such as organizational fairness, perceived organizational support, and inadequate management were identified as the primary causes of CWB (Ng & Yang, 2023). In human resource (HR) management, businesses must identify the elements that cause CWB to limit its negative impact. Perceptions of organizational unfairness, job discontent, and interpersonal disputes in the workplace are common triggers for CWB (Fatfouta & Schwarzingler, 2024; Ng & Yang, 2023).

One of the theories that explain the emergence of CWB is the conservation of resources (COR) put forward by Hobfoll et al. (2018). According to this theory, individuals seek to maintain the resources they have such as energy, time, and psychological well-being. When those resources are threatened or lost, individuals are more likely to respond with behaviors that are detrimental to the organization, including through CWB. Threats such as loss of rights, lack of support, or excessive work pressure can trigger CWB among employees.

In addition to COR, affective events theory (AET) by Weiss and Beal (2005) highlights the importance of emotional events in the workplace in influencing employee behavior. According to AET, negative events such as injustice or conflicts between employees trigger negative emotions such as frustration and anger, which then encourages involvement in CWB as a form of venting. This suggests that negative emotions mediate between unpleasant conditions and involvement in counterproductive behaviors.

In addition to emotional triggers, personality traits are also crucial predictors of CWB engagement. According to the Big Five model, employees with high neuroticism are more stress-prone and more likely to participate in CWB (Pletzer, 2021). On the other hand, employees with stronger emotional stability can regulate their emotions and stress more effectively, making them less prone to participate in CWB. Furthermore, qualities associated with the Dark Triad, such as narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism, were shown to be strongly related to CWB engagement. Individuals who exhibit these characteristics are likely to be greedy, manipulative, and lack empathy (Ying & Cohen, 2018).

Despite the established relationship between organizational injustice and CWB, particularly through the mediation of negative emotions (De Clercq & Pereira, 2024), there is still a lack of research examining the interaction between organizational justice dimensions (distributive, procedural, and interactional) and personality

factors such as neuroticism and emotional stability in the moderation of CWB involvement. In addition, there are still few studies that examine the interaction between organizational justice and negative emotions that arise from everyday micro-interactions between superiors and subordinates, which are often triggers for subtle CWB. This reflects a lack of understanding of how the organizational justice dimension can mitigate or exacerbate the impact of negative emotions on engagement in CWB, especially concerning certain personality traits (Grijalva & Newman, 2015).

In response to these gaps, the present study aims to explore how organizational justice, negative emotions, and personality traits interact to influence CWB. It is critical to understand how the elements of organizational justice (distributive, procedural, and interactional) not only influence negative feelings in employees but also reduce their impact on counterproductive conduct (Fida et al., 2014). Furthermore, by focusing on personality traits such as neuroticism and emotional stability, this study will investigate how specific personalities might enhance or reduce the impact of injustice on CWB participation. This study also considers the importance of daily interaction between superiors and subordinates in creating a perception of justice that can reduce or worsen the negative impact of emotions on involvement in CWB. Thus, through a series of research questions focused on the interaction between organizational justice, negative emotions, and personality factors, it is hoped that this research can make a significant contribution to CWB-related literature as well as provide practical insights for organizations to reduce the risk of employee involvement in counterproductive behavior.

To address these research gaps, the following key questions will be explored:

RQ1: How do the elements of organizational justice (distributive, procedural, and interactional) influence the link between negative emotions and employee involvement in counterproductive work behavior?

RQ2: How do employee characteristics, notably neuroticism and emotional stability, influence their counterproductive work behavior participation when encountering corporate injustice?

RQ3: How can day-to-day micro-interactions between superiors and subordinates on organizational justice influence employee engagement in counterproductive work behavior?

The structure of this paper is as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature on CWB and the factors influencing it, such as organizational justice and negative emotions. Section 3 discusses the methodology used in this research, including the justification for using a systematic review and alternative methodological approaches. Section 4 presents the results of the analysis and the key findings derived from the reviewed literature. Section 5 contains a discussion of the practical and theoretical implications of these findings. Section 6 concludes this research by offering suggestions for future studies, outlining the limitations of this research, including methodological constraints, geographical context, and the generalizability of the findings, and providing recommendations for practitioners and organizational managers to reduce CWB and improve employee well-being in the workplace.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Counterproductive work behavior

Counterproductive work behavior is defined as an employee's purposeful activity that harms the business or its members, which can range from misusing work time to more serious behaviors like sabotage or theft (Na-Nan et al., 2020). CWB causes not just financial losses but also harms the work environment and employee well-being (Lebrón et al., 2018).

One key framework that sheds light on the emergence of CWB is the COR Theory, proposed by Hobfoll et al. (2018) introduced the COR theory, which is crucial to understanding CWB. According to this hypothesis, people would attempt to keep and develop resources that they value. When such resources are endangered or lost, people get stressed, which can lead to unproductive actions. In organizations, the loss of resources, such as psychological well-being, is frequently the cause of CWB as a reaction to adverse situations.

Various factors affect CWB, including individual characteristics and situational factors. One of the theories that is often used to explain the causes of CWB is the theory of organizational justice (Zhao et al., 2022). Injustice in distribution or decision-making procedures often triggers CWB. Distributive injustice is related to dissatisfaction with the distribution of rewards, while procedural injustice concerns decision-making processes that are considered unfair (De Clercq & Pereira, 2024). This injustice is seen as a threat to the psychological resources of employees, in line with the COR theory.

Another relevant framework is the AET by Weiss and Beal (2005) is also useful in explaining CWB. According to AET, significant workplace events elicit emotions, which in turn impact behavior. For example, interpersonal conflict or unfairness from a supervisor might elicit negative feelings, such as irritation, which stimulate participation in CWB (Chirumbolo, 2015).

Individual attributes are also significant predictors of CWB involvement (Wiernik & Ones, 2018). Individuals with high neuroticism are more likely to experience stress and participate in CWB, whereas those with strong emotional stability are better equipped to handle stress and are more likely to avoid CWB (Chirumbolo, 2015). CWB has a substantial influence on enterprises, resulting in decreased employee productivity and well-being. To combat CWB, companies must provide a fair and supportive work environment and apply effective emotion control measures (De Clercq & Pereira, 2024). The study also emphasizes the importance of the Dark Triad, which encompasses narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism, in predicting CWB (Grijalva & Newman, 2015). Individuals who exhibit these characteristics are more manipulative and less empathic, making them more likely to engage in harmful behavior (Chirumbolo, 2015).

2.2. Organizational justice

Organizational fairness is an important concept in organizational behavior that refers to employees' perceptions of how fairly they are treated, especially in terms of procedures, resource distribution, and interpersonal treatment (Lim & Loosemore, 2017). This perception of fairness has a major impact on

employee attitudes, behaviors, and performance, both positively and negatively, including in influencing CWB.

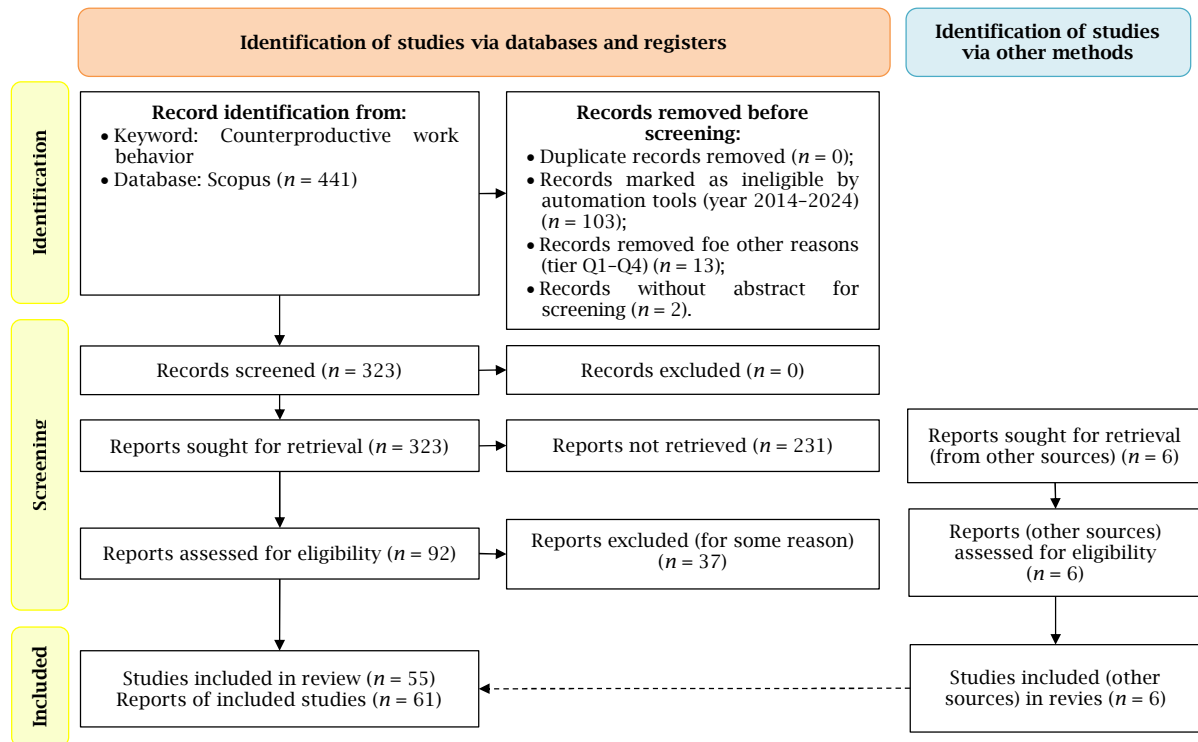
Organizational justice is commonly divided into three main dimensions: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (Akram et al., 2017). The term distributive justice relates to fairness in resource allocation, such as salaries and promotions, and is connected to. Employees who believe that resource allocation is unjust are more inclined to engage in CWB, such as theft or sabotage (Hu & Han, 2021). Procedural justice focuses on fairness in the decision-making process. According to Nazir et al. (2019), factors such as consistency and impartiality in the implementation of procedures affect the perception of justice. Employees involved in this process are likelier to feel fair, even if the outcome isn't always favorable.

Another key dimension is interactional justice, which involves the quality of interpersonal treatment that employees receive from superiors (Fida et al., 2014). Hu and Han (2021) show that respectful treatment and transparent communication from superiors play a big role in shaping the perception of justice. This dimension includes interpersonal justice and informational justice. A high perception of fairness encourages positive behaviors such as organizational commitment and job satisfaction. In contrast, organizational injustice often triggers CWB, which is behavior detrimental to the organization, such as reduced productivity and sabotage. Chirumbolo (2015) found that distributive and procedural injustice encourages destructive behavior as a form of "retribution" for injustice.

Theories such as equity theory help explain how perceptions of unfairness can motivate deviant behavior to compensate for perceived injustice distinguished between CWB directed at organizations (CWBO) and superiors (CWBS). Injustice inside the organization tends to activate CWBO, but injustice from superiors motivates CWBS more (Jawahar & Stone, 2017).

3. METHODOLOGY

This study investigates CWB in organizations through a systematic literature review of 61 articles published between 2014 and 2024, following Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to ensure methodological rigor (Page & Moher, 2017). The PRISMA approach involves several key stages: study identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion. The processes of identification, screening, and extraction of manuscripts were conducted using Watase Uake software (Simarmata et al., 2024). During the identification stage, a comprehensive search of the Scopus database was conducted using specific keywords such as "counterproductive work behavior", "organizational justice", and "emotional intelligence". The screening process applied inclusion criteria based on publication year, relevance to the research questions, and alignment with the objectives of the systematic review. Eligibility criteria included the availability of full texts, language (limited to English), and relevance to the specified research themes. Studies that were not available in full text were not in English, or lacked substantial alignment with the focus on CWB, emotional regulation, or organizational dynamics were excluded.

Figure 1. Identification, screening, and inclusion steps

This systematic literature review utilized thematic analysis to synthesize findings from the included studies, supported by hypothesis network analysis to determine relationships between variables, such as antecedents, mediators, and outcomes of CWB (Hariningsih et al., 2024). To enhance transparency, the concept matrix approach was used to group articles by specific themes, providing a comprehensive view of organizational and individual factors influencing CWB.

An alternative methodological approach suggested for future research is the use of quantitative meta-analysis. While systematic reviews provide an overarching qualitative understanding, meta-analysis allows for a quantitative examination of the effect sizes of various predictors of CWB across different contexts. Additionally, mixed-methods approaches that integrate survey data with qualitative insights could provide a richer understanding of CWB, combining depth from individual experiences with broader statistical patterns (Grijalva & Newman, 2015). The main findings indicate that distributive and procedural justice and personality traits such as neuroticism and emotional stability are significant predictors of CWB. This study provides a novel contribution by highlighting the critical role of daily interactions between supervisors and subordinates in shaping justice perceptions and moderating employees' emotional responses.

Practical steps recommended for organizations include equitable resource distribution, transparent decision-making processes, and enhanced communication between supervisors and employees. Emotional intelligence training for supervisors can further help reduce negative emotional responses and mitigate the risk of CWB. Moreover, this study encourages exploring cross-cultural perspectives to better understand how cultural differences influence justice perceptions and engagement in CWB across diverse workplace environments.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of a systematic literature review is to summarize and categorize knowledge and conduct research mapping. This section highlights the progress of the 61 research articles identified related to CWB, classified by year of publication, country where the study was conducted, type of analysis method used, leading journals published, role of environment and organizational factors study, CWB influencing factors, CWB categories, theoretical basis, and citation analysis. In addition, a detailed explanation of the profile or study paper's results will be provided. Finally, this essay discusses the antecedents, mediators, and effects of attitude factors on unproductive workplace behavior. In conclusion, this paper identifies the theory's flaws and conducts an analysis using the theory, methodology, and context (TMC) framework to recommend new possibilities for further study.

4.1. Year of publication

From 2014 to 2024, academic interest in CWB varies according to organizational dynamics and the work environment. In 2014, seven papers marked the start of an academic investigation into CWB, concentrating on the fundamental conception of counterproductive conduct in the workplace, as well as its influence on performance and job satisfaction.

In 2015, the number of publications decreased slightly to six, with the research emphasis possibly shifting toward related areas, such as the impact of job stress and motivation on CWB. Despite the slight drop, these studies continued to build on prior knowledge by exploring the underlying factors that contribute to such behaviors. A notable dip occurred in 2016, with only three publications, indicating a temporary decline in academic attention. However,

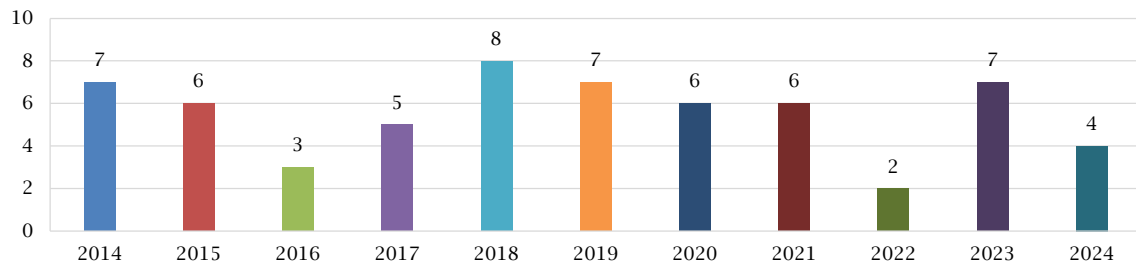
the studies from this year delved deeper into the psychological and social factors that influence CWB, enriching the theoretical frameworks that explain why employees engage in counterproductive (De Clercq & Pereira, 2024).

The downward trend reversed in 2017, with five publications marking a renewed interest in CWB research. This resurgence was likely driven by increasing awareness of the negative consequences of CWB on organizational performance and changes in organizational culture. Studies from this year began

to focus more on how fostering a healthy work environment could mitigate CWB (Ng & Yang, 2023).

A significant surge occurred in 2018, with eight publications, recording the highest number of publications in the decade. This year's research is likely to examine the long-term impact of CWB, especially in HR management. In 2019, seven publications were released, demonstrating consistent interest in CWB. The research focuses on team dynamics, communication between employees, and organizational policies to reduce CWB.

Figure 2. Year of publication



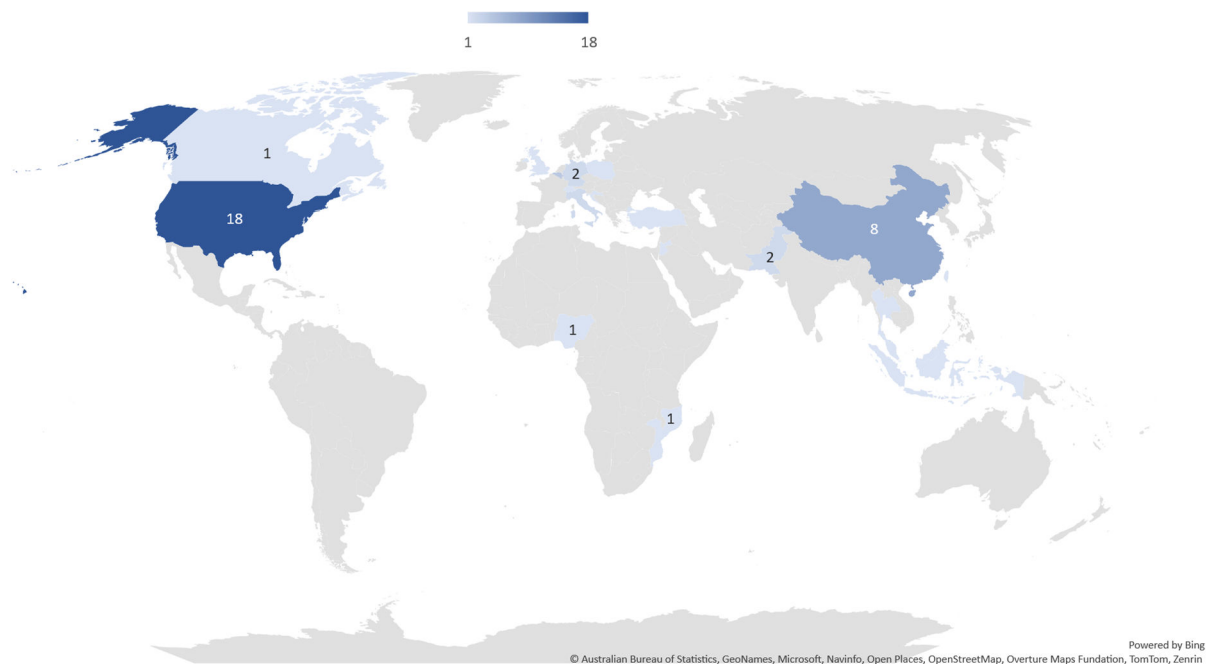
Although the COVID-19 pandemic affected the world of work, six CWB-related publications were released in 2020, focusing on the impact of remote work on employee behavior (Becker et al., 2022). Research in 2021, with six publications, highlighted adaptation to remote work and hybrid systems, with a focus on stress management and employee wellbeing. Subsequently, 2022 saw a significant fall, with only two publications, probably owing to a change in attention to other issues such as mental health. Nevertheless, in 2023, the number of publications grew again, this time

with seven papers focusing on the importance of technology in CWB mitigation (Bauer & Spector, 2015). Finally, until 2024, four articles demonstrate a continuous interest in creative methods for tackling CWB in an increasingly digital work environment.

4.2. Country of study

Figure 3 shows the distribution of research on CWB in different countries.

Figure 3. Empirical country



A review of the distribution of research on CWB in various nations reveals that the United States (US) leads with 18 studies. This strong focus on CWB in the US might be attributed to the country's complex labor market, organizational structure, and emphasis

on factors such as work pressure, performance management, and organizational culture. In addition, the US prioritizes labor regulations and business ethics, which further promotes research into CWB. China ranks second with eight studies. In contrast to

the US, research in China often focuses on workplace dynamics driven by competition, productivity demands, and high job expectations (Regina & Allen, 2023). As the country continues to expand its business sector, the importance of studying how CWB affects corporate performance is becoming more pronounced.

The cross-country analysis identified six papers that provide a comparative perspective on unproductive behaviors across different cultures and companies (Na-Nan et al., 2020). These studies contribute to understanding the variances and similarities in employee behavior across nations, offering valuable insights into global management practices.

Belgium and the “Unidentified” category each had four studies. In the case of Belgium, research may reflect the work dynamics typical of Western Europe. At the same time, the “Unidentified” category includes studies that use global data or are not tied to a specific geographic location. Pakistan, Germany, and Italy each recorded two studies. In Pakistan, research tends to focus on how economic challenges influence employee behavior (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2019). Meanwhile, in Germany, the emphasis is likely on how the pressure to maintain high productivity impacts CWB.

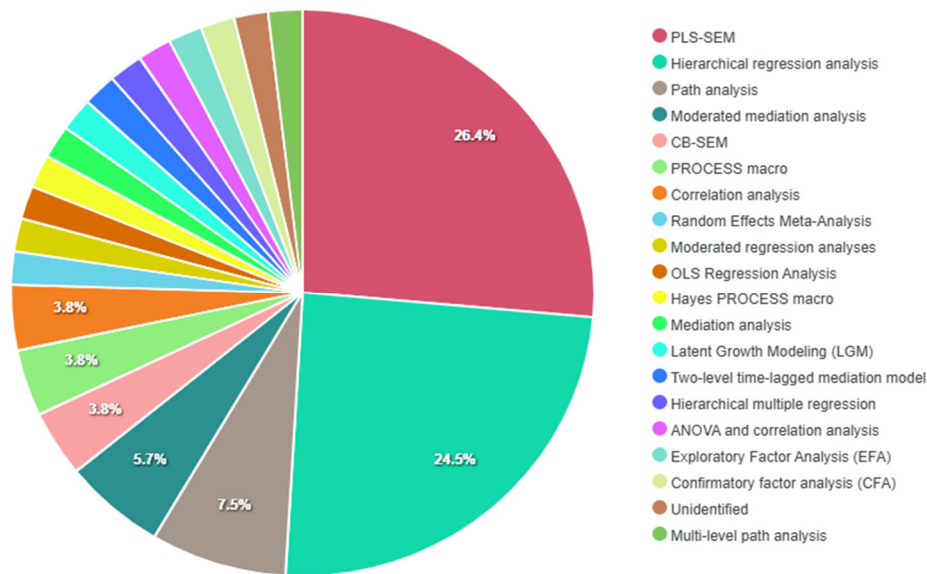
On the other hand, Italy’s research may focus on the HR management challenges within its small and medium-sized enterprises.

Other nations, such as Mozambique, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Canada, have one study each. In developing countries like Indonesia and Nigeria, CWB research is particularly relevant due to economic uncertainty and limited resources. By contrast, in developed countries like Switzerland and Canada, studies may emphasize work-life balance and stress management within more stable socio-economic environments.

4.3. Types of analysis methods used

According to Figure 4, the authors divided the methods of analysis in the articles into twenty groups. The most prevalent analytic approach is partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), which is used in 26.4% of all articles. This widespread use of PLS-SEM is likely due to its ability to handle complex models and interactions between numerous variables. Additionally, it is favored for its flexibility compared to traditional SEM, especially when dealing with smaller sample sizes or non-normal data distributions.

Figure 4. Types of analysis methods used



Coming in second, hierarchical regression analysis is utilized in 24.5% of the articles. This method allows researchers to assess the impact of independent variables on dependent variables while controlling for the effects of other variables. This is particularly useful in organizational behavior and work psychology studies, where multiple factors can influence outcomes, and researchers aim to pinpoint the most significant predictors.

Path analysis appears as the third most common method, used in 7.5% of the articles. This technique helps researchers understand both direct and indirect relationships between variables, a useful tool in work behavior research to determine how one variable affects another through specific paths or mediation. Furthermore, moderated mediation analysis was employed in 5.7% of the articles. This method enables researchers to examine how the mediation relationship between two variables

shifts when a moderator variable is introduced, which is highly relevant in research focusing on contextual factors or conditions moderating variable relationships.

Other methods used in smaller proportions include covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) at 3.8%, along with PROCESS macro, correlation analysis, and random effects meta-analysis, all also at 3.8%. CB-SEM tends to be used with larger sample sizes to explore covariance relationships between variables within structural models. Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression and mediation analysis were applied in 3.8% of the articles as well. The variety of analytical methods employed reflects the complexity of the models often used in this research field. While PLS-SEM and hierarchical regression dominate, as they are well-suited for modeling complex relationships in behavioral and psychological research, path analysis and moderated mediation

analysis allow for a deeper exploration of causal relationships and interactions, which are critical for understanding counterproductive behavior in organizational settings.

4.4. Major publishing journal

Table 1 shows that many journals in the fields of organizational psychology and HR play an important role in scientific publishing, both in terms of the number of papers published and citations.

Table 1. Major publishing journal

No	Journal	Tier	Citation	Total articles
1	<i>International Journal of Selection and Assessment</i>	1	130	7
2	<i>Human Performance</i>	1	221	6
3	<i>Applied Psychology</i>	1	241	4
4	<i>Journal of Organizational Behavior</i>	1	330	3
5	<i>Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources</i>	2	41	2
6	<i>European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology</i>	1	66	2
7	<i>Leadership & Organization Development Journal</i>	1	0	2
8	<i>The Journal of Psychology</i>	1	63	2
9	<i>Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology</i>	1	81	2
10	<i>The International Journal of Health Planning and Management</i>	2	61	2

However, despite only publishing three papers, the *Journal of Organizational Behavior* has received the most citations (330). This demonstrates that, despite a smaller number of publications, the published articles have a considerable influence on the subject of organizational behavior. *Applied Psychology* and *Human Performance* have high citation counts of 241 and 221, respectively, suggesting that the academic community values the research published in these publications. Other publications, such as the *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources* and the *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, have made fewer contributions (just two papers each), but they remain relevant in academic discourse, with 41 and 66 citations, respectively.

Other publications, such as the *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, have zero citations despite publishing two articles. This might imply that the articles have not received adequate recognition or have not had enough time to attract widespread notice within the academic community.

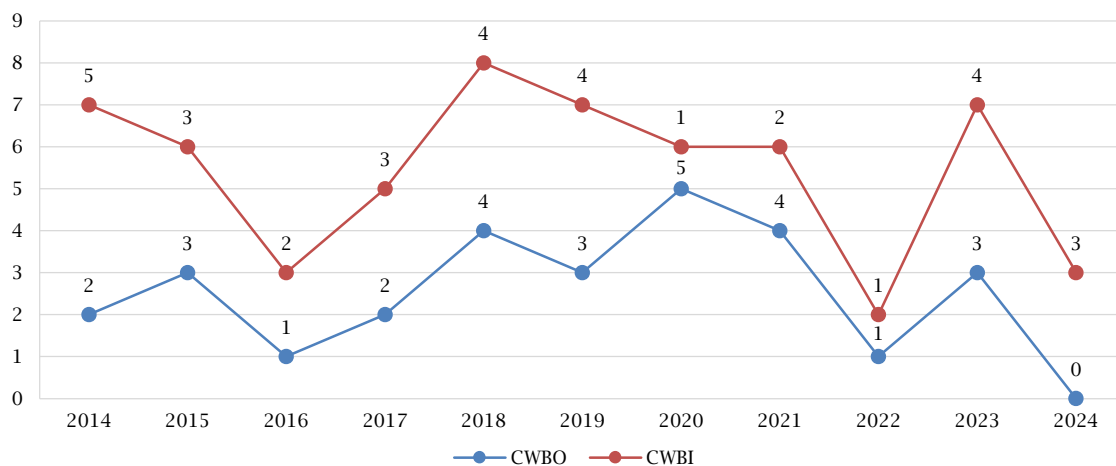
The *International Journal of Selection and Assessment* has the most papers, with seven publications. Although it does not have the most citations, the publication contributes significantly to the advancement of research in workplace selection and evaluation. *Human Performance*, with six papers, and *Applied Psychology*, with four articles, both had a high production, highlighting their focus on human performance and the application of psychology in corporate situations.

4.5. Counterproductive work behavior category

In this study, we divided CWB into two main categories: CWBO and CWB towards individuals (CWBtI). These two categories have attracted the attention of many researchers, especially related to the role of organizational justice, the work environment, and individual differences in triggering these behaviors.

CWBO refers to actions that harm the organization, such as theft, sabotage, or deliberately producing substandard work (De Clercq & Pereira, 2024). According to De Clercq and Pereira (2024), CWBO is usually triggered by dissatisfaction with the organization's policies or perceived injustice by employees. Research by Akram et al. (2017) shows that injustice in the distribution of resources or treatment from superiors often triggers CWBO, as a form of protest against the organization. The work environment also influences CWBO and found that toxic work culture, bullying, and interpersonal conflict increase the occurrence of CWBO. High job stress, such as overwork, can lead to counterproductive actions that harm individual and organizational performance.

Figure 5. Counterproductive work behavior category



On the other hand, CWBI focuses on actions directed toward coworkers, such as harassment, verbal insults, and physical aggression. These behaviors severely undermine interpersonal relationships within the organization, damaging team cohesion and morale (Germeys & De Gieter, 2017). Griep and Vantilborgh (2018) discovered that CWBI often triggers interpersonal conflicts and frustrations, where employees channel their negative emotions toward their organization.

Personality traits also influence CWBI. Germeys and De Gieter (2017) discovered that those with low levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness were more prone to engage in CWBI. Furthermore, those who experience strong negative emotions, such as rage, are more prone to act aggressively against coworkers. Organizational circumstances, such as bottlenecks in tasks or a shortage of resources, can raise the risk of CWB. According to An et al. (2016), job limits frequently irritate, resulting in CWBO and CWBI. Conflicts with superiors are also a significant predictor of CWBI, as displeasure with authority can severely influence colleagues' relationships.

Furthermore, the Dark Triad's psychological qualities (narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy) are associated with unproductive conduct. Individuals with these characteristics are more likely to engage in CWB, both with the organization and with other people (Ying & Cohen, 2018). Negative emotions, stress, and a lack of control over the work environment all contribute significantly to CWB (Akram et al., 2017).

Based on the graph (Figure 5), research trends on CWBO and CWBI from 2014 to 2024 show interesting fluctuations. CWBO started with a low number (2) in 2014, rose slightly in 2015 (3), but declined sharply in 2016 (1). The increase occurred again in 2017 until the peak in 2018 (4), indicating employee dissatisfaction with the organization's policies. After that, the CWBO trend declined steadily in 2019 and 2020 (3–4) but fell drastically in 2022 (1), which may reflect management improvements. In 2023, CWBO will again rise to 3, before dropping to zero in 2024.

Meanwhile, the CWBI trend indicates increasing numbers that vary. Starting at number 5 in 2014, the CWBI steadily fell until 2016 (2), possibly due to improvements in interpersonal interactions. However, CWBI grew again in 2017 (3) and peaked in 2018 (7), most likely due to increasing interpersonal conflict. This trend fell rapidly in 2021 (1), showing an improvement in employee relationships, then rebounded in 2022 to a high (8), possibly signifying a serious conflict amongst employees. In 2023, the CWBI fell again (4), and in 2024, it reached 3, suggesting attempts to improve the workplace atmosphere.

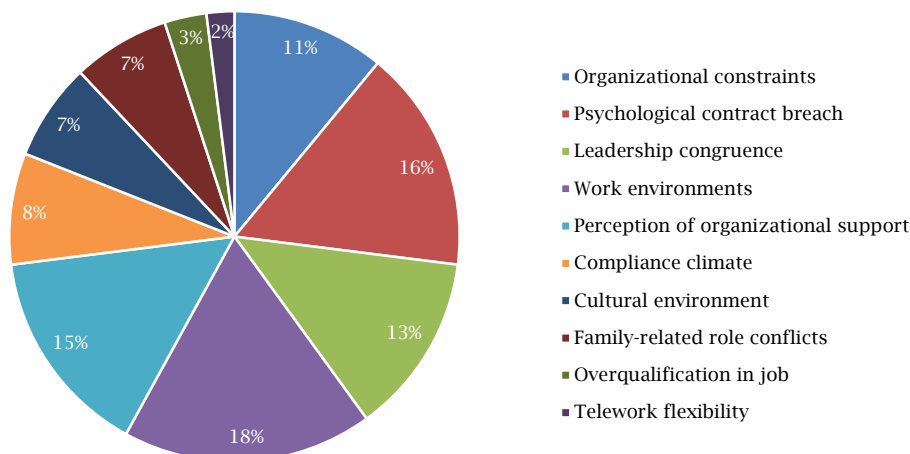
4.6. Role of environment and organizational factors studied

According to numerous studies, CWB is influenced by a variety of factors, including personal traits as well as environmental and organizational elements (De Clercq et al., 2021). Based on Figure 6, variables such as the *Work environments*, *Perception of organizational support*, *Organizational constraints*, and *Psychological contract breaches* significantly impact CWB (Grijalva & Newman, 2015).

The *Work environments* account for 18% of CWB. An unfavorable work environment, characterized by poor conditions, excessive pressure, or lack of support, can increase stress and emotional strain among employees. This often leads to undesirable behaviors such as non-compliance or even sabotage. Additionally, interpersonal conflicts within the workplace can exacerbate tensions among colleagues, potentially leading to aggressive acts like verbal insults or passive-aggressive behavior (CWBI) (De Clercq & Pereira, 2024).

Psychological contract breach makes up 16% of the factors influencing CWB. This breach occurs when employees feel that their expectations or the organization's implied promises are not fulfilled. Such violations, including failure to deliver promotions or promised benefits, often trigger disengagement or sabotage as a form of retaliation, leading to CWB (Grijalva & Newman, 2015).

Figure 6. Role of environment and organizational factors studied



The *Perception of organizational support* accounts for 15%, underscoring the importance of management and organizational backing in minimizing CWB. Employees who feel supported and valued by their organizations are more likely to stay committed and less likely to engage in

counterproductive actions. On the other hand, employees who perceive a lack of support may respond with behaviors such as reducing their effort, delaying tasks, or withdrawing from responsibilities (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003).

Organizational constraints, which account for 11%, include obstacles such as insufficient resources and inadequate policies. Employees who feel impeded in carrying out their jobs are more prone to become upset and engage in undesirable behaviors such as delaying work or causing damage to organizational property. According to research, reducing these restraints can enhance productivity while decreasing CWB (Pindek et al., 2019).

Compliance climate accounts for 8% of the CWB factors. This refers to the organizational culture around rules and regulations. A weak compliance climate, where rules are unclear or inconsistently enforced, may lead employees to feel justified in breaking organizational norms, thereby engaging in counterproductive behavior. Ensuring a strong, clear compliance culture can mitigate these risks (Grijalva & Newman, 2015).

Family-related role conflicts and cultural environment, each accounting for 7%, highlight the importance of work-life balance and cultural integration in the workplace. Family-related role conflicts occur when the demands of work interfere

with family responsibilities, leading to increased stress and, potentially, counterproductive actions (Germeyns & De Gieter, 2017). Similarly, a negative cultural environment, such as one lacking diversity or respect for cultural differences, can contribute to workplace tensions and undesirable behaviors.

Overqualification in job, which accounts for 3%, refers to the feeling of being overqualified for one's current role. Employees who believe their skills and qualifications exceed the requirements of their jobs often experience dissatisfaction and boredom (Pindek et al., 2019). This mismatch can lead to disengagement, frustration, and eventually to counterproductive behaviors, such as reducing effort or failing to meet performance standards.

Finally, *Telework flexibility*, though a smaller factor, accounting for 2%, still plays a role in CWB. Offering employees flexibility to work remotely can reduce stress by allowing them to balance personal and professional responsibilities better. When telework flexibility is available, employees may experience less stress and a lower likelihood of engaging in CWBs (Grijalva & Newman, 2015).

Figure 7. Role of environment and organizational factors studied timeline

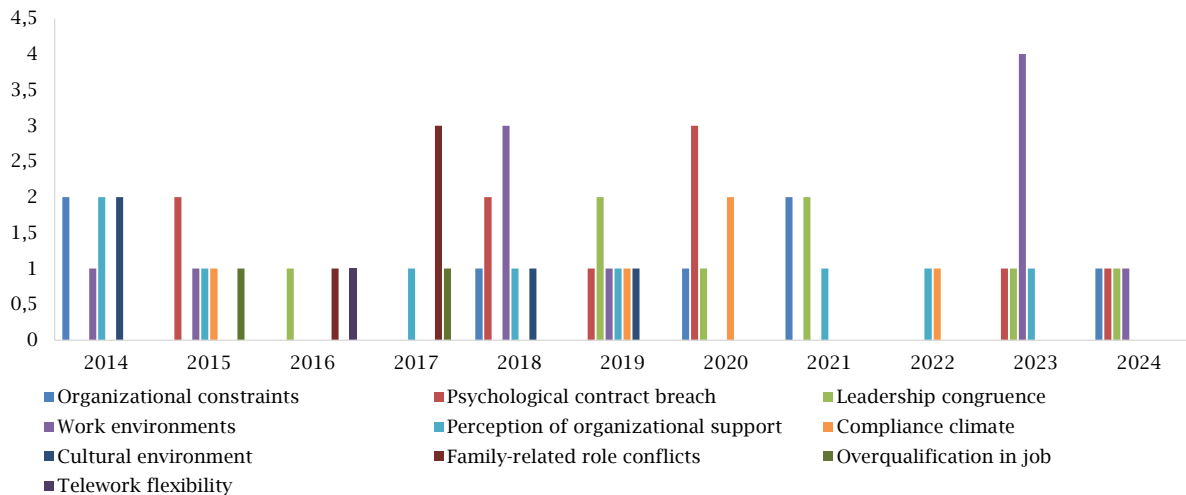


Figure 7 illustrates the role of environment and organizational factors in influencing workplace behavior from 2014 to 2024. The timeline analysis reveals how the focus of research has shifted over time. From 2014 to 2016, the research primarily concentrated on organizational constraints and work environments. These early studies highlighted how limitations within the organization, such as inadequate resources or overly restrictive policies, coupled with unfavorable work environments, led to increased stress and dissatisfaction among employees. At the same time, the cultural environment was also acknowledged as an influential factor, with supportive or unsupportive cultural settings shaping employee behavior and overall performance.

Moving into the period from 2017 to 2019, the focus shifted toward more relational and personal factors, such as psychological contract breaches and family-related role conflicts. When employees felt that their employers had not met expected obligations, engagement levels dropped, and CWB increased. Additionally, the pressure of balancing work and family roles became more pronounced, with family-related role conflicts playing

a significant role in employee disengagement. Alongside this, the perception of organizational support emerged as an important consideration, as employees who felt supported by their organizations were better able to manage conflicts and avoid negative behaviors.

During the 2020 to 2021 period, the focus of research transitioned toward leadership congruence and compliance climate. Studies in this phase examined how alignment between leadership values and organizational culture helped create a more harmonious and stable work environment, reducing workplace conflicts. The importance of a strong compliance climate, reflecting the adherence to organizational rules and policies, became especially relevant, likely influenced by the growing trend of remote work and shifts in workplace dynamics due to global challenges.

Finally, from 2022 to 2024, research turned toward overqualification in job and work environments. Employees who felt they were overqualified for their positions often experienced frustration, leading to reduced motivation and engagement. Simultaneously, the work environment

continued to play a critical role, emphasizing how both the physical and psychological conditions in the workplace remained key factors in shaping employee satisfaction and overall performance.

4.7. Factors Influencing counterproductive work behavior

According to Figure 8, several key factors contribute to CWB, each with varying levels of influence (Ying & Cohen, 2018). These factors, ranked by their impact, are discussed below.

The most significant factor is emotional intelligence, which accounts for 23% of CWB. Employees with low emotional intelligence struggle to manage their emotions, especially under pressure, which can lead to negative behaviors such as anger or passive-aggressiveness. In contrast, those with high emotional intelligence are better able to handle stress and conflicts effectively, thereby reducing CWB (Grijalva & Newman, 2015).

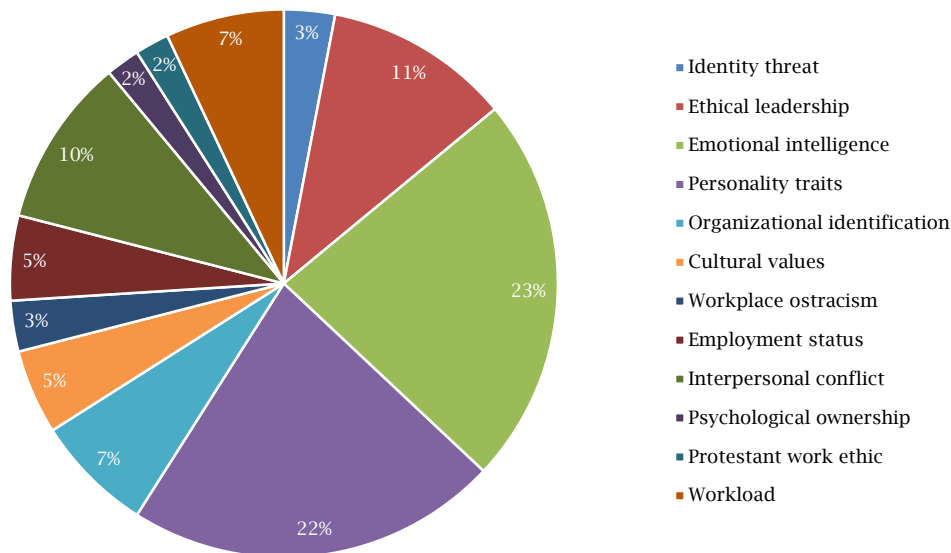
Another crucial factor is personality traits, which influence 22% of CWB. Employees with high levels of neuroticism are more likely to be emotionally unstable and stressed, thereby

increasing the risk of CWB. Conversely, traits such as conscientiousness and agreeableness encourage cooperative and diligent behavior. Conscientious employees tend to be meticulous, while agreeable employees foster positive work relationships, reducing conflict and mitigating CWB (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003).

Furthermore, ethical leadership plays an important role, contributing 11% to the reduction of CWB. Ethical leadership shapes employee behavior by fostering a supportive work environment. Leaders who display fairness and integrity contribute to employee satisfaction and lower the chances of CWB. On the other hand, unethical leadership practices — such as favoritism — can trigger retaliatory behavior from employees, thus increasing CWB (Griep & Vantilborgh, 2018).

In addition, interpersonal conflict also has a significant impact, accounting for 10% of CWB. When conflicts between employees are left unresolved, they can lead to frustration and hostile behavior. Therefore, resolving interpersonal issues swiftly is essential for maintaining a positive work environment and reducing the occurrence (Germeys & De Gieter, 2017).

Figure 8. Factors influencing counterproductive work behavior



Next, organizational identification and workload each account for 7% of CWB. Employees with low organizational identification, who do not feel connected to their organization's mission, are more likely to become disengaged, ultimately increasing CWB. Similarly, excessive workload can lead to stress and burnout, which can further contribute to CWB. Consequently, effective workload management and providing adequate support are vital to mitigating these risks (Germeys & De Gieter, 2017; Griep et al., 2020).

Moving forward, cultural values and employment status each contribute 5% to CWB. A mismatch between an employee's values and the organization's values can lead to disengagement and increase the risk of CWB. Ensuring a strong cultural fit helps foster a cohesive workforce (Chirumbolo, 2015). Moreover, job insecurity can lead to stress and disengagement, increasing the likelihood of counterproductive actions.

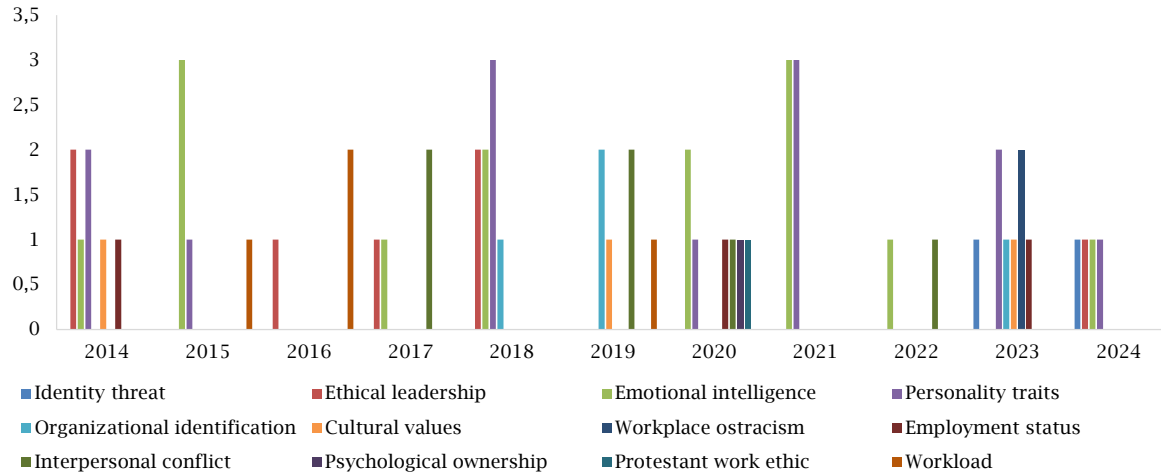
Another contributing factor is workplace ostracism and identity threat, each accounting for 3% of CWB. Employees who feel excluded or ignored often experience emotional distress, which may lead them to retaliate against the organization. Similarly, identity threats — where employees feel their professional or personal identity is being undermined — can result in disengagement and CWB. To minimize these issues, fostering inclusivity and respect within the workplace is crucial (Na-Nan et al., 2020).

Finally, protestant work ethic and psychological ownership each play a small role, contributing 2% to reducing CWB. Employees with a strong protestant work ethic tend to value hard work and discipline, making them less likely to engage in CWB. Similarly, psychological ownership, which is the sense of responsibility over one's tasks, makes employees feel more invested in their work, thereby reducing the likelihood of CWB.

The study timeline in Figure 9 for CWB from 2014 to 2024 depicts the evolution of characteristics that influence employee counterproductive behavior, such as emotional intelligence, ethical leadership, and personality traits. In the early part of this period, research focused heavily on emotional

intelligence, which plays a critical role in how employees manage their emotions in the workplace. Employees with low emotional intelligence struggle to regulate negative emotions, making them more prone to engaging in CWB.

Figure 9. Factors influencing counterproductive work behavior timeline



Ethical leadership is also important, since fair and honest leaders may foster a healthy work environment while reducing CWB. Unethical leadership, on the other hand, exacerbates employee unhappiness, raising the probability of undesirable actions such as sabotage.

From 2017 to 2019, the focus switched to interpersonal disputes, cultural beliefs, and ostracism. Employee conflicts, cultural differences within the team, and social isolation all contribute to poor employment relationships, increased stress, and CWB. Conflicts that are not managed properly tend to trigger verbal aggression or sabotage, while social exclusion causes employees to feel unappreciated and more vulnerable to CWB.

In 2020–2021, the study highlighted the impact of workload and employment status. Overworkload leads to stress and demotivation, increasing the risk of CWB such as task procrastination or non-compliance. Job uncertainty also triggers anxiety and increases involvement in negative behaviors. From 2022 to 2024, research focuses on organizational identity and psychological ownership. Employees who feel linked to the organization's principles and accountable for their jobs are more driven and less involved in CWB. Those who feel emotionally alienated from their company, on the other hand, are more likely to engage in unproductive actions.

4.8. Theoretical foundation

Figure 10 illustrates the development of the use of theories in CWB research from 2014 to 2024. One dominant theory is the COR Theory, which highlights how workplace stressors, organizational fairness, and employees' perceptions of their resources influence the tendency to engage in CWB (Hobfoll et al., 2018). COR theory focuses on how people acquire, preserve, and retain resources including time, energy, social support, and security. Threats to these resources inside an organization, such as severe workloads or a lack of support, can lead to counterproductive conduct. Employees

who perceive that their resources are being threatened or diminished are more likely to engage in CWB, such as procrastination or sabotage, in reaction to stress.

Furthermore, organizational justice theory is closely linked to COR theory. When employees believe they are being treated unfairly, such as not receiving a legitimate promotion or remuneration, they see a danger to their resources and might utilize CWB as a form of protest (DeConinck & Johnson, 2009). From 2017 to 2024, research employing COR theory will increase as firms recognize the importance of employee well-being and resource management in the modern workplace.

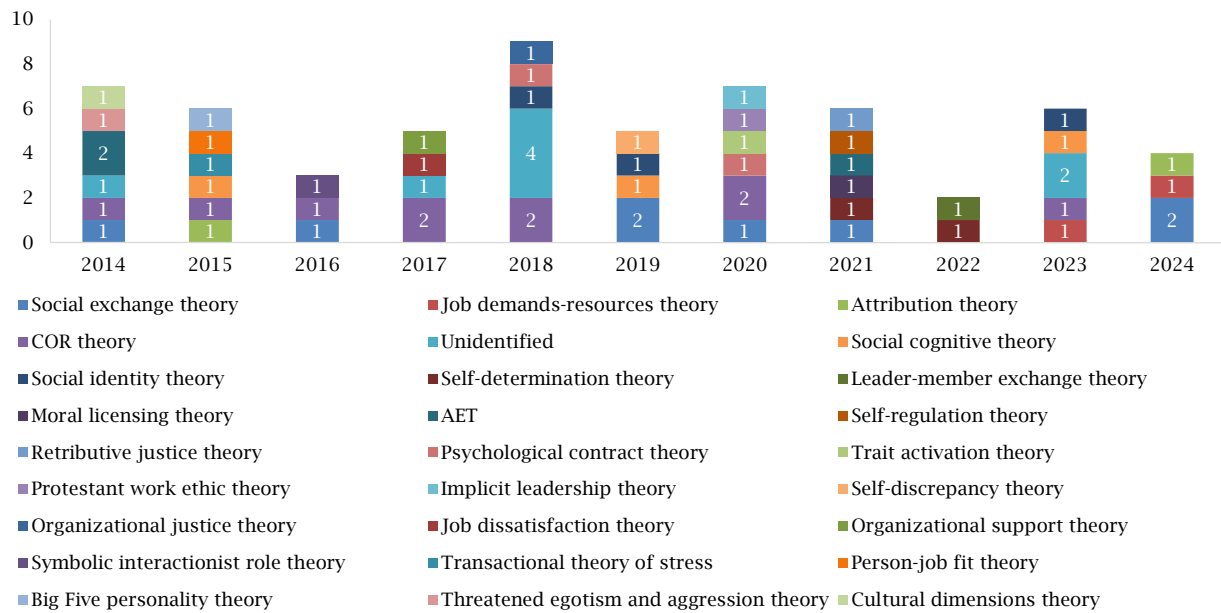
In addition to COR theory, job demands-resources theory was frequently employed at this time. Job demands-resources theory emphasizes how excessive job demands can deplete employee resources, but organizational support (job resources) can help maintain balance and prevent CWB (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014).

Between 2017 and 2019, the psychological contract theory gained traction. This theory focuses on the unspoken expectations between employees and the organization (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003). When organizational promises, such as promotions or increases, are not realized, employees believe their resources have been decreased, resulting in CWB. In the perspective of COR theory, a psychological breach of contract is viewed as a danger to HR.

Moving forward to 2021–2023, attribution theory became more prevalent to explain how employees interpret negative events in the workplace. If employees blame the organization for injustice or stress, they are more likely to perform CWB in response. Self-regulation theory also emerged, explaining how failure to manage emotions under pressure can trigger CWB (Moehl & Friedman, 2022).

Additionally, AET gained popularity in 2019–2020. AET emphasizes how emotional experiences at work impact employee moods and behaviors. Negative events, such as conflict or injustice, trigger negative emotions that ultimately increase the likelihood of CWB (Weiss & Beal, 2005).

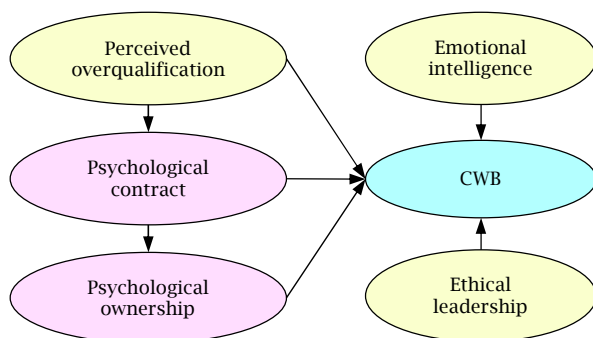
Figure 10. Theoretical foundation timeline



5. DISCUSSION

This study delves into the intricate dynamics of CWB within organizational settings, providing a comprehensive framework that synthesizes prior research into a coherent model. By integrating antecedent, mediating, and consequent variables, the analysis reveals how these elements interact to shape employee behaviors, often in response to perceived injustices and unmet expectations. The study highlights the nuanced interplay of psychological, emotional, and structural factors that converge to drive or mitigate counterproductive tendencies.

Figure 11. Research model suggestions



Central to understanding these dynamics is the role of antecedent variables such as *perceived overqualification*, *emotional intelligence*, and *ethical leadership*. When employees perceive themselves as overqualified, a mismatch emerges between their skills and the demands of their roles, threatening critical psychological resources such as self-esteem and recognition (Hobfoll et al., 2018). This dissonance, as theorized by the COR framework, breeds frustration and resentment, often manifesting in behaviors that undermine organizational objectives. However, this narrative is not purely deterministic. *Emotional intelligence* emerges as a significant counterbalance, equipping employees with the capacity to regulate

negative emotions and navigate workplace challenges with composure (Agarwal & Gupta, 2018). Similarly, ethical leadership provides a stabilizing influence, creating environments where fairness and integrity are not merely aspirational but operational realities. Leaders who model moral behavior reinforce a culture of trust, reducing employees' propensity to engage in destructive actions (De Clercq et al., 2021).

Yet, the pathway from antecedent factors to CWB is rarely linear. Mediating variables, particularly *psychological contracts*, and *psychological ownership* play a pivotal role in shaping how employees interpret and respond to their circumstances. The breach of *psychological contracts*, wherein implicit agreements between employees and organizations are perceived to be violated, often triggers a cascade of negative emotions and retaliatory behaviors. Such breaches erode the social and emotional bonds that underpin workplace cohesion, prompting disengagement and, in some cases, outright defiance (Hobfoll et al., 2018). In parallel, the degree of psychological ownership — an individual's sense of belonging and investment in their role — profoundly influences behavioral outcomes. Employees who feel emotionally connected to their work exhibit a greater commitment to organizational goals, while those who experience detachment are more likely to engage in counterproductive behaviors (Bordia et al., 2017). These mediating dynamics underscore the complexity of CWB, illustrating how seemingly individualistic actions are, in fact, deeply embedded in organizational contexts.

The consequences of these interactions manifest in diverse and often damaging ways. CWB can range from subtle acts of withdrawal, such as procrastination or reduced effort, to more overt forms of sabotage and aggression (Germeys & De Gieter, 2017). The findings of this study underscore the dual influence of personality traits and organizational practices in moderating these behaviors. Employees with high neuroticism are particularly vulnerable, as their predisposition to emotional instability amplifies their negative reactions to perceived injustices. Conversely,

individuals with greater emotional stability exhibit resilience, navigating workplace stressors without resorting to destructive actions (Bordia et al., 2017). This bifurcation suggests that organizations must adopt a dual-pronged approach, addressing both systemic factors that perpetuate injustice and individual vulnerabilities that heighten susceptibility to CWB.

Leadership emerges as a critical focal point in this discourse. Supervisors, through their daily interactions with employees, wield considerable influence over perceptions of fairness and the emotional climate of the workplace. Poor communication and perceived insensitivity can exacerbate feelings of inequity, while emotionally intelligent leadership fosters a sense of inclusion and respect. The findings highlight the necessity of training supervisors not only in technical competencies but also in the soft skills required to build trust and defuse tensions (Germeys & De Gieter, 2017; Grijalva & Newman, 2015). Such interventions are particularly vital in mitigating the ripple effects of distributive and procedural injustices, where unfair resource allocation and opaque decision-making processes fuel resentment and disengagement.

Cultural and structural factors further shape the prevalence and impact of CWB. Organizational cultures that prioritize transparency, equity, and consistent support are better equipped to preemptively address the triggers of counterproductive behaviors. Conversely, environments marked by ambiguity and favoritism create fertile ground for dissatisfaction and conflict. The study's insights emphasize that promoting procedural fairness is not merely a matter of ethical compliance but a strategic imperative for enhancing workplace harmony and productivity. This perspective is particularly salient in contemporary work environments, where technological advancements and hybrid work arrangements introduce new dimensions of justice and equity (Tsai, 2021).

The analysis also extends to practical implications, offering actionable strategies for organizations seeking to reduce CWB. Transparent resource allocation processes, coupled with emotional intelligence training for leaders, can significantly enhance perceptions of fairness and reduce negative behaviors. Incorporating personality assessments into recruitment and development practices enables organizations to identify and support individuals at greater risk of emotional dysregulation (Germeys & De Gieter, 2017). These measures, while individually impactful, are most effective when integrated into a holistic approach that aligns organizational policies with the psychological and emotional needs of employees.

In synthesizing these findings, the study provides a nuanced understanding of the factors that drive CWB, offering both theoretical and practical contributions. The implications extend beyond the immediate organizational context, highlighting the broader importance of fairness and emotional regulation in fostering sustainable workplace cultures. By addressing the root causes of CWB and prioritizing interventions that strengthen employee engagement and trust, organizations can create environments that minimize risks and maximize potential (Grijalva & Newman, 2015).

6. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the crucial role of organizational justice, emotional regulation, and personality traits in shaping CWB. Key findings reveal that perceptions of distributive and procedural injustice significantly contribute to the occurrence of CWB, particularly among employees with low emotional stability. This emphasizes the importance of organizations implementing equitable resource allocation and transparent decision-making processes to reduce perceptions of injustice and minimize counterproductive behaviors. Furthermore, fostering effective communication between supervisors and employees can create a more supportive and positive work environment. Incorporating personality assessments during recruitment and providing emotional regulation training can further help mitigate the risks of employee involvement in CWB, improving employee well-being and organizational productivity.

However, this study has certain limitations. Much of the research has been conducted in Western cultural contexts, which may not fully reflect the dynamics of other regions. Additionally, the predominant reliance on quantitative methods often overlooks employees' subjective experiences regarding injustice and engagement in CWB. To address these limitations, future research should employ qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviews or case studies, to capture richer insights into employees' emotional responses and coping mechanisms. Longitudinal research is also needed to track changes in CWB over time, particularly in response to major shifts in workplace dynamics due to global pandemics and technological advancements.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly transformed workplace dynamics, underscoring the need to adapt traditional theories like COR to remote and hybrid work environments mediated by digital technologies. While COR has been effective in explaining how resource loss triggers CWB, its application to virtual work settings remains largely unexplored. Future research could benefit from integrating digital psychology theories or technology adaptation models to examine how technological tools affect perceptions of justice and the likelihood of CWB in evolving work contexts.

Additionally, there is a need for a deeper exploration of interactional justice, particularly in terms of informational and interpersonal aspects. While much-existing research focuses on distributive and procedural justice, interactional justice is equally important in mitigating the negative emotions that drive CWB. The cognitive social theory could be leveraged to understand how employees learn about and react to injustice through workplace social interactions. By incorporating elements of social learning, researchers can better explain how daily interactions and subtle leadership cues influence perceptions of fairness and engagement in counterproductive behaviors.

The majority of CWB research utilizes experimental approaches. However, future studies should consider employing qualitative methodologies, such as in-depth interviews or case studies, to explore employees' subjective experiences of organizational unfairness and their engagement in CWB. These approaches can provide a richer understanding of how negative emotions arise during social interactions and how they contribute

to CWB. Additionally, longitudinal research is necessary to observe changes in CWB over time, especially in response to technological advancements and the shifts caused by global disruptions like the pandemic.

Cross-cultural analysis also presents an underexplored area in current literature. Most existing studies have been conducted in Western cultures, often assuming the universal applicability of organizational justice concepts. However, employee responses to organizational injustice can vary significantly depending on cultural contexts. Cross-cultural studies are essential to understanding how cultural values influence perceptions of injustice and engagement in CWB. Research in developing countries, such as Indonesia and other parts of Asia, remains limited and should be expanded to provide broader insights into global workplace dynamics.

The growing impact of digitization and remote work offers further opportunities for future research. The role of technology, such as digital platforms, in

shaping perceptions of justice and influencing CWB has not been sufficiently examined. Key questions include whether communication technology affects employees' perceptions of procedural and interactional justice and how virtual interactions compare to face-to-face interactions in influencing the likelihood of CWB. A deeper investigation is needed to understand how virtual leadership and digital work environments shape superior-subordinate dynamics and employee engagement in CWB.

Additionally, emerging generations, particularly Generation Z, represent an intriguing focus for future studies. As Generation Z enters the workforce during the digital era, their expectations regarding fairness and workplace justice may differ significantly from those of earlier generations. Research should explore how this generation perceives fairness and injustice in workplaces shaped by technology and how their expectations for a fair work environment influence their participation in CWB.

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