

## COUNTERPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIORS AND WORK PERFORMANCE IN MILITARY ORGANIZATION

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**Abstract:** Counterproductive behavior is an important part of work performance, and a risk for both the individual and the organization. We were interested to identify a valid measure of counterproductive work behavior for the military domain and we chose the CWB scale, which is a part of the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ). Cronbach's coefficient indicates a good internal consistency of the CWB scale. Analysis of the correlations shows the following: the high frequency of counterproductive behaviors correlates with (1) the decrease in the quality of the work done by the employee and with (2) the increase in the frequency of the moments in which the amount of his/her work is lower than expected. In addition, the high frequency of counterproductive behaviors correlates positively with difficulties in concentrating, remembering and decision-making.

**Keyword:** Counterproductive behavior, work performance

### 1. Introduction

Counterproductive behaviors represent a risk for both the individual and the organization. Such behaviors can manifest in a wide variety of forms, from minor acts such as leaving early, working slow, spreading rumors and inappropriate use of the Internet to major acts like stealing or sabotaging organization's equipment, harassment or physical violence toward other members of the organization. Numerous studies have found a direct connection between counterproductive behaviors and job stressors and organizational justice (Fox, Spector & Miles, 2001), job stress, incivility and negative affectivity (Penney & Spector, 2005), personality and job satisfaction (Mount, Ilies & Johnson, 2006), components of work performance and individual differences (Borman, White, Pulakos & Oppler, 1991; Schmidt & Hunter, 1992; Viswesvaren & Ones,

2000) and many other work and organization related concepts.

Sackett and DeVore propose the following definition: "Counterproductive workplace behavior at the most general level refers to any intentional behavior on the part of an organization member viewed by the organization as contrary to its legitimate interests." (Sackett and DeVore, 2002, p. 145).

Analyzing the literature on this concept, M.L. Gruys (apud Sackett and DeVore, 2002) identified 87 separate counterproductive behaviors included in 11 broad categories as follows:

- Theft and related behavior
- Destruction of property
- Misuse of information
- Misuse of time and resources
- Unsafe behavior
- Poor attendance
- Poor quality work
- Alcohol use

- Drug use
- Inappropriate verbal actions
- Inappropriate physical actions toward coworkers

DeVore and Sackett's definition emphasizes the organization's perspective on counterproductive behavior; however, other authors propose alternative approaches.

For instance, Kelloway, Francis, Prosser and Cameron (2010) studied counterproductive behavior "as a form of protest in which organizational members express dissatisfaction with or attempt to resolve injustice within the organization." (Kelloway et al, 2010, p. 18). They believe that we can talk about two forms of counterproductive behavior - individual or collective - that can have two types of targets – the individual or the organization. Combining these two axes, the authors obtained four-dimensional model:

1. Individual action, organizational target (minor acts like leaving early or working slow or major acts like sabotaging equipment or stealing)

2. Collective action, organizational target (minor types of deviance including working slowly or taking long lunch breaks or major types such as legal strikes and work to rule campaigns, sabotage or theft)

3. Individual action, individual target (acts of interpersonal violence or aggression)

4. Collective action, individual target (mobbing and bullying behaviors)

Robinson and Bennett (*apud* Popa, 2008) believe that there is a link between counterproductive behavior and deviance and therefore they proposed a taxonomy of deviant behaviors in the workplace that contains two main categories:

- Interpersonal deviance: deviant behaviors in relation to colleagues, supervisor or subordinates (verbal or physical aggression, sexual harassment, etc.);

- Organizational deviance consisting of (1) behaviors that negatively affect the quantity and quality of work and

(2) behaviors that affect property (theft, damage to property etc.).

M. Popa (2008) presents the results of a large study conducted by Campbell in 1990 for the US Army - Project A - and of the study of J. Campbell, McHenry and Wise, also in 1990 - Career Force Project. These authors have proposed and used a multidimensional model of performance applicable in any profession. In their studies, they used a large number of predictors of performance and criterion variables within the context of a set of military functions. They identified five performance criteria: technical proficiency, general soldiering proficiency, effort/leadership, personal discipline and fitness/military bearing. They found negative correlations between counterproductive behaviors and technical proficiency ( $r = -0.17$ ), general soldiering proficiency ( $r = -0.19$ ) and effort/leadership ( $r = -0.59$ ).

## 2. Methodology

This paper presents some of the results of a larger study, which aims to analyze the cognitive, affective and motivational factors involved in military performance. Consistent with current perspective, we consider counterproductive behaviors as an important part of work performance. Because every occupation has its particularities, we were interested to identify a valid measure of counterproductive work behaviors which can be applied also to the the military field.

Koopmans, Bernaards, Hildebrandt, van Buuren, van der Beek and de Vet developed the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IW PQ). These authors have identified a three-dimensional conceptual framework in which the individual work performance consisted of task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behavior.

IW PQ 1.0 is a short questionnaire that measures work performance at the individual level comprehensively and generically, among workers from different

occupational sectors, with and without health problems. It consists of 18 items distributed in three scales measuring task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behavior. All items had a recall period of 3 months. The scale measuring counterproductive behavior consists of five items and has a five-point rating scale (“*never*” to “*often*”). For each scale, one can calculate a score by adding the item scores, and dividing their sum by the number of items in the subscale; therefore, for every subscale scores can range from one to five. Higher scores are indicators of higher task and contextual performance and higher counterproductive work behavior.

Koopmans et al. examined the construct validity of the IWPQ and find that the counterproductive work behavior score showed a weak to moderate negative correlation with work engagement. In their study, work engagement correlated more with contextual performance than with task performance or counterproductive behaviors. Persons high in job satisfaction and overall health showed lower IWPQ counterproductive work behavior scores.

For our analysis were processed 91 complete questionnaires answered by 46 officers (OF1 and OF2) and 45 military specialists (O.R 5 to O.R.9). The T-test analysis for independent samples showed no significant differences between officers and NCOs regarding the counterproductive behavior scores. In addition, only a small number of women answered so far to our

questionnaire (10 subjects) so that we could not apply a T test analysis.

### 3. Results

Cronbach's coefficient for the CWB scale is .74, indicating a good internal consistency.

**Table 1. Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.745	.743	5

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for each item of the CWB scale.

Table 3 shows the correlation matrix and provides an image of the degree of association between the items of the scale. As we can see, none of the items show negative associations with the others, which is an indication that the items were properly constructed. In addition, correlation coefficients have a medium value, which indicates that the degree of similarity between items is very low.

Table 4 contains information on the relationship between the items and the global score. As we can see, the correlation between item no. 1 and the global score is 0.25, a little over the minimum acceptable correlation. In addition, the deletion of this item increases Cronbach's alpha coefficient from 0.74 to 0.78.

All the other items have very good correlations with the global score.

**Table 2. Item Statistics**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
<b>Item 1.</b> I complained about unimportant matters at work	1.96	.988	91
<b>Item 2.</b> I made problems greater than they were at work	1.53	.861	91
<b>Item 3.</b> I focused on the negative aspects of a work situation, instead of on the positive aspects	1.82	.995	91
<b>Item. 4.</b> I spoke with colleagues about the negative aspects of my work	2.21	1.150	91
<b>Item 5.</b> I spoke with people from outside the organization about the negative aspects of my work	1.69	1.008	91

**Table 3. Inter-Item Correlation Matrix**

	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 3	Item 4
Item 1	1.000	.184	.252	.262	.098
Item 2	.184	1.000	.485	.325	.394
Item 3	.252	.485	1.000	.663	.499
Item 4	.262	.325	.663	1.000	.497
Item 5	.098	.394	.499	.497	1.000

**Table 4. Item-Total Statistics**

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Item 1	7.25	9.902	.257	.092	.785
Item 2	7.68	9.264	.472	.274	.714
Item 3	7.38	7.639	.699	.539	.626
Item 4	7.00	7.244	.632	.490	.648
Item 5	7.52	8.430	.518	.333	.696

Table 5 shows the correlations between the five items of the scale. The first item correlates only with the second and third item and these correlations are weak. All other items of the scale correlate highly with each other.

In another section of our questionnaire, we asked the subjects to assess their own level of performance in the workplace by answering the following four questions:

1. I think that, in the last three months, the quality of my work was:  
1 = very low; 2 = low; 3 = medium; 4 = high; 5 = very high

2. I think that, in the last three months, the amount of work that I have done:

1 = has increased a lot; 2 = increased slightly; 3 = did not changed; 4 = decreased slightly; 5 = decreased a lot

3. In the last three months, how often the amount of work you did has been lower than that expected?

1 = Never; 2 = Seldom; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Often; 5 = Always

4. In the last three months, how often the quality of the work you did has been lower than that expected?

1 = Never; 2 = Seldom; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Often; 5 = Always

Analysis of the correlation between the score of the scale that measures counterproductive behaviors and the responses to these four questions shows the following:

- the high frequency of counterproductive behaviors correlates (1) with the decrease in the quality of the work done by the employee and (2) with an increase in the frequency of the moments in which the amount of his/her work is lower than expected. (Table no. 6)

**Table no. 5. Inter –Item Correlations**

		Item. 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5
Item 1	Pearson Correlation	1	.184	<b>.252*</b>	<b>.262*</b>	.098
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.080	<b>.016</b>	<b>.012</b>	.356
	N	91	91	91	91	91
Item 2	Pearson Correlation	.184	1	<b>.485**</b>	<b>.325**</b>	<b>.394**</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.080		<b>.000</b>	<b>.002</b>	<b>.000</b>
	N	91	91	91	91	91
Item 3	Pearson Correlation	.252*	.485**	1	<b>.663**</b>	<b>.499**</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016	.000		<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>
	N	91	91	91	91	91
Item 4	Pearson Correlation	.262*	.325**	.663**	1	<b>.497**</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012	.002	.000		<b>.000</b>
	N	91	91	91	91	91
Item. 5	Pearson Correlation	.098	.394**	.499**	.497**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.356	.000	.000	.000	
	N	91	91	91	91	91

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 6. Correlations between counterproductive behavior score and quantity and quality of employee's work in the last three months**

		I think that, in the last three months, the quality of my work was:	In the last three months, how often the amount of work you did has been lower than that expected?
Counterproductive behavior score	Pearson Correlation	-.254*	.222*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	.034
	N	91	91

In the section of the questionnaire dedicated to cognitive factors influencing the performance of military, subjects had responded to following four questions:

1. In the last three months, how often have you had difficulty concentrating? (Never to always)

2. In the last three months, how often have you found it difficult to think clearly? (Never to always)

3. In the last three months, how often have you had difficulty taking decisions? (Never to always)

4. In the last three months, how often have you had difficulties to remember different things? (Never to always)

Analysis of the correlation between the score of the scale that measures counterproductive behaviors and the responses to these four questions shows the following: the high frequency of counterproductive behaviors correlates positively with difficulties in concentrating, remembering and decision-making. (Table 7)

**Table 7. Correlations between counterproductive behavior score and frequency of employee's cognitive difficulties**

		In the last three months, how often have you had difficulty concentrating?	In the last three months, how often have you had difficulty taking decisions?	In the last three months, how often have you had difficulties to remember different things?
Counterproductive behaviors score	Pearson Correlation	.336**	.346**	.341**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.009	.007	.008
	N	91	91	91

#### 4. Conclusions

The CWB scale of the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire has a good internal consistency. None of its items show negative associations with the others, which is an indication that the items were properly constructed. In addition, correlation coefficients have a medium value, which indicates that the degree of similarity between items is very low. The last four items have very high correlation with the global score and with each other.

The correlation between the first item and the global score is just a little over the minimum acceptable correlation. In addition, the deletion of this item increases the Cronbach coefficient from 0.74 to 0.78. However, we choose to keep

this item because it does not have a negative correlation with the global score, so it brings useful information in relation to the measured attribute, although not in a proportion as high as other items.

In our study, the high frequency of counterproductive behaviors correlates with (1) the decrease in the quality of the work done by the employee, (2) the increase in the frequency of the moments in which the amount of his/her work is lower than expected and with (3) difficulties in concentrating, remembering and decision-making.

As a conclusion, we consider that this scale is an appropriate instrument to measure counterproductive behaviors in the military domain.

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