

The Counterproductive Behavior at Work: The Role of Personality and Ethical Leadership in Malaysia

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Abstract. Any organization's success is based on the conduct of its personnel. Positive ethical values are required to stop bad behaviours within the organisation in order to accomplish this. In light of the aforementioned, this study examined the relationship between personality traits and moral leadership and unproductive workplace behaviour. Quantitative research methods are being used in this study. The study's support team from UiTM was chosen using a purposeful sampling approach. To determine the internal consistency reliability and discriminant validity of variables, data analysis was performed using SPSS 26.0. The findings revealed that neuroticism and ethical leadership are the most influential dimensions of personality factors among support staff in UiTM Selangor ($\beta=-0.310$, $p<0.00$; $\beta=-0.601$, $p<0.00$). However, the other dimension does not influence counterproductive work behaviours. Therefore, it was discovered that only two out of six dimension of personality factors acted as predictors towards counterproductive work behaviours among support staff at UiTM Selangor. Future research was proposed to be conducted using a larger sample size with an equal number of participation from both genders. The study recommended an extensive understanding of the factors that be used to reduce counterproductive work behaviour in other sectors in the short and long runs.

Keywords: Counterproductive Work behaviours, Personality Factors, Ethical Leaders

1 Introduction

Employee workplace behaviour defined as "counterproductive work behaviours" (CWBs) has the potential to jeopardise the aims and interests of a corporation. Tardiness, theft, fraud, sexual harassment, bullying at work, absenteeism, drug use, violent behaviour at work, or sabotage are all examples of CWBs. These behaviours not only have an adverse effect on the quality of the work done by the employee who engages in CWBs, but they can also have an adverse effect on other employees' productivity and pose undesired risks to the organisation [1][2]. However, organisational moral tenets are always in charge of CWBs. A certain amount of financial loss and even long-term harm to the employment environment must be accounted for by CWBs [3]. The Malaysia Transformation Agenda has placed a major emphasis on developing strong, effective, and efficient public sector organisations, including universities (2015). This agenda, which is based on the 20th National Planning, the Keluarga Malaysia

idea, and Malaysia Vision 2020, intends to strengthen the Malaysian economy to suit the needs of Malaysian residents. The Malaysia Vision 2020 teaches public officials and other personnel to carry out their official obligations and duties in accordance with the highest ethical standards. The Federal Government created institutions, including the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission, to enforce these and put a stop to the growth of corrupt activities in Malaysia (MACC). Organizations, especially in this instance colleges, need to be led by ethically oriented leaders who should be reflective of the finest aspects of human nature in order to carry along all of their employees and limit the rising prevalence of CWBs [4]. However, in most of these organisations, CWBs have taken over because the principal operators have not embraced and integrated the art and practise of ethical leadership into their operations in relation to the Big Five Personality Factors of agreeableness, openness, extraversion, conscientiousness, and neuroticism [5]. Due to their relevance to the proposed independent variable of ethical leadership, these criteria received enough attention in the aforementioned studies.

2 Literature Review

To better understand the interplay between the independent variables (personality traits and ethical leadership) and the dependent variables (counterproductive behaviours), this research focuses on the former.

2.1 Counterproductive behaviour

Any purposeful behaviour on the part of an organisational member that is perceived by the organisation as being at odds with its legitimate interests is referred to as counterproductive work behaviour (CWBs) [6][7]. Some instances of this kind of behaviour include theft, sabotage, withdrawal, sexual harassment, drug usage, actions with the potential for destruction, acts of physical aggression, and substandard work.. These behaviours are optional in that they go beyond completing tasks and are chosen by the person in terms of their frequency, form, and intensity [8]. Counterproductive Work Behaviors (CWBs) occur when volunteers engage in actions that are destructive to the organisation or its members or that are done with malicious intent. CWBs are often used as a synonym for antisocial, deviant, dysfunctional, retaliatory, and unethical behaviour in the workplace; other names for CWBs include organisational delinquency, production and property deviance, workplace deviance, and related words. Organizational misbehaviour, deviant behaviour, dysfunctional actions, and non-complaining actions are all terms for the same thing: unproductive behaviour in the workplace. Despite the lack of consensus among researchers on the terminology's use and application, they are thought to be comparable constructs in their definitions [1]. Several research studies have been carried out in recent years on counterproductive work behaviours [1]. Considering the Financial, Social, and Psychological Implications of this Phenomenon [9]. Several of these research have also forecasted unproductive employee behaviour in the form of their unfavourable personality characteristics [10] job experiences [11] and factors in the workplace that may lead to stress include bad working conditions, abusive management, unclear roles, and workplace disputes. [12]. Additionally, research have shown that unsatisfied workers are more prone to exhibit theft-related behaviours [7] and sabotage, interpersonal antagonism, animosity, and complaints are likely to be the root causes of stress in the job [13].

2.2 Personality and Big Five Factors

In 1990, Digman [14] proposed the five-factor model of personality and Goldberg [15] extended it to the highest level of organisations in 1993 [16]. Factor analysis, a statistical technique used to examine the relationships between assessments of various personality traits and human behaviour, led to the discovery of the Big Five factors. The American and Western European samples were heavily weighed in the original derivations, and experts are presently exploring how much the Big Five structure may be applied to other cultures. The OCEAN acronym stands for the Big Five personality traits: openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Each personality attribute may be broken down into its constituent parts (dimensions), which are:

- a) *extraversion* (sometimes called Surgency): Being chatty, active, and aggressive are particular characteristics.;
- b) *Agreeableness*: Being empathetic, caring, and loving are attributes.
- c) The characteristics of *conscientiousness* include a well-organized, carefully-thought-out plan of action.
- d) *Neuroticism* (sometimes reversed and called Emotional Stability) has traits like tense, moody, and anxious.
- e) *Openness to Experience* (sometimes called Intellect or Intellect/Imagination) includes qualities like having a variety of interests, being creative, and having insightfulness.

2.3 Ethical Leadership

Simply put, having excellent character, the appropriate ideals, or having strong character is not enough to be an ethical leader [17]. The ethical leader may lead by example and overcome any obstacles that may come his way. Additionally, moral leadership considers both the leader and his followers (followers and key stakeholders), the environment or circumstance that the leader and his followers encounter, as well as its results. A leader is first and foremost a member of the stakeholder group and his own organisation. Thus, the organisation as a whole and its main stakeholders are the beneficiaries of his mission, vision, and values. A leader who upholds ethical principles also embodies the organization's and its constituents' goals, vision, and values. He or she establishes a link between the organization's aims and those of its internal workers and external stakeholders. Previous research has demonstrated that ethical leadership is important in developing strong bonds with workers based on mutual respect and trust as well as on integrity, honesty, fairness, equity, and justice [17]. Recent research has also shown a connection between ethical leadership and important outcomes for followers, such as job satisfaction, organisational commitment, openness to reporting problems to managers, willingness to go above and beyond, voice behaviours (the expression of constructive suggestions to improve standard procedure), and perceptions of organisational culture and ethical climate [18]. In a high-stakes, competitive business setting, ethical executives are more likely to be promoted to upper management [19]. High-pressure situations have been linked to unethical conduct in the past [20].

2.4 Conceptual Framework

The research design, shown in Figure 1, focuses on the relationship between unethical workplace behaviours and leaders that prioritise ethics above self-interest. The dimensions of

personality factor are adapted from [21] Meanwhile, the interrelated factors of counterproductive work behaviours are adopted from [22]. The study makes the claim that a leader's personality or set of traits is likely to foster the growth of moral leadership and, as a result, lessen CWBs among UiTM support workers in Selangor, Malaysia. The social exchange theories mentioned above might lend credence to this claim. The study's proposed conceptual framework is depicted in the following graphic.

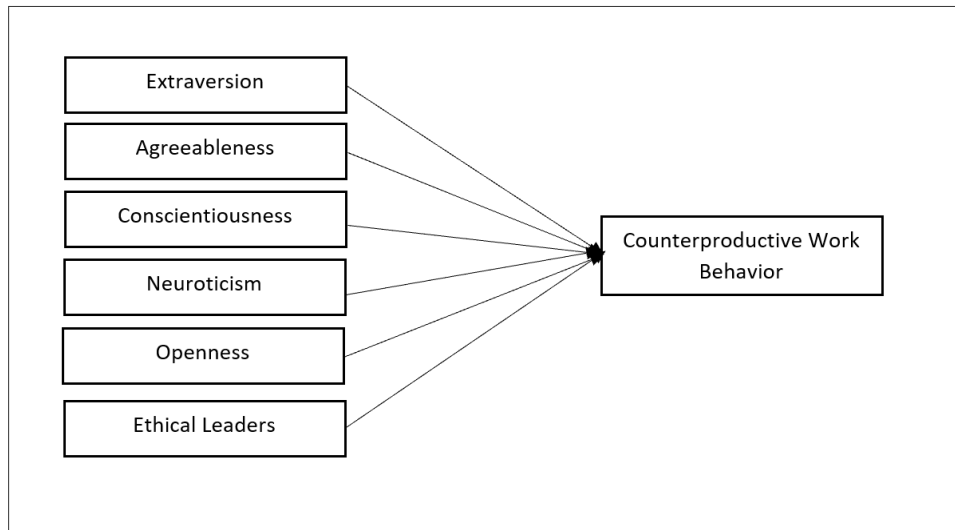


Fig. 1. The Framework of the Study

2.5 Research Questions

Research questions are formulated in the study as follows:

1. What is the level of counterproductive work behaviours among support staff at UiTM Selangor?
2. Which dimensions of personality factors and ethical leadership predict counterproductive work behaviours among support staff at UiTM Selangor

3 Methodology

The members of population in this study were the support staff of UiTM Selangor. Purposive sampling technique was applied as a means of sample selection. The sample size of the study was 216. Remarkably, this study managed to collect 268 sets of responses. According to [23] a larger sample size improves precision and reliability. Moreover, data were collected by using an online Google Form and the link was distributed through WhatsApp and Email. Other than that, the items used for personality factors were adopted from [21] the responses were gauged using seven-point scale. The multidimensional of counterproductive work behaviours was adopted from [24] and the data were collected using seven-point scale. This is meant to avoid from having a common method bias issue.

4 Findings

Table 1. Summary of Descriptive Statistics

Respondents' Profile	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	42	15.7
Female	226	84.3
Age		
31-40 years old	193	72.0
41-50 years old	45	16.8
51 years old and above	30	11.2
UiTM Selangor Support Staff		
Shah Alam	121	45.1
Puncak Alam	86	32.1
Sungai Buloh	40	14.9
Puncak Perdana	21	7.8

This study managed to obtain 268 set of responses. According to the results in Table 1, Majority of the respondents were female with a total of 226 (84.3%) compared to male with only 42 (15.7%) subjects. Meanwhile, the highest number of responses were recorded from those aged 31-40 years old with a total of 193 (72%), followed by those aged 41-50 years old with 45 (16.8%) subjects and those aged 51 years old and above with 30 (11.2%) subjects, respectively. Among these 268 sets of responses, 121 (45.1%) respondents were from UiTM Shah Alam which contribute to the highest number of responses, followed by 86 (32.1%) respondents from UiTM Puncak Alam, UiTM Sungai Buloh with respondents number of 40 (14.9%) respondents and 21 (7.8%) respondents from UiTM Puncak Perdana.

4.1 RQ 1: What is the level of counterproductive work behaviours among support staff at UiTM?

To compare the degree of unproductive work behaviours among support personnel at UiTM, descriptive statistics were performed for both independent and dependent variables. Based on the Best Principle, the results were interpreted by (Thaoprom, 2004). Scores were divided into three ranges which are high, average and low with the computation like this: $5 - 1/3 = 1.33$.

Thus, the results are:

- Scores between 1.00-2.33 = Low Scores
- Scores between 2.34-3.67 = Moderate Scores
- Scores between 3.68-5.00 = High Scores

The assessment on the level of counterproductive work behaviours revealed that as indicated in Table 2. It was found that all dimensions were at high and moderate levels.

Table 2. Level of Counterproductive Work Behaviours among Support Staff at UiTM?

Respondents	Variable	N	Mean	Std Deviation	Level
UiTM Selangor Support Staff	Extraversion	268	3.6668	.91636	Moderate
	Agreeableness	268	3.8469	.87866	High
	Conscientiousness	268	3.2023	1.03692	Moderate
	Neuroticism	268	3.6314	.92856	Moderate
	Openness	268	4.0516	.91410	High
	Ethical Leadership	268	3.9077	.68592	High
	Overall Personality Factor	268	3.8611	1.10676	High
	Overall CWBs	268	4.4729	.61327	High

Several contradictory behaviour studies have corroborated the conclusions based on the UiTM Selangor support personnel in Malaysia. According to [9], unproductive work behaviours may be influenced by a combination of personality traits, lack of ethical standards, and negative work environments. Environmental influences, a lack of training, employee personality and life changes, and external causes are just a few examples. As supported by [25]. Workplace problems like tardiness, theft, fraud, sexual harassment, bullying, absenteeism, substance abuse, aggression, or sabotage can be addressed by providing employees with new challenges, motivating them to improve the work they're already doing, and emphasising the importance of maintaining a positive work environment.

4.2 RQ 2: What is the relationship between personality factor and ethical leaders on counterproductive work behaviours among support staff at UiTM?

Table 3 illustrates the relationship between independent and dependent variables which will be interpreted using [26] [27] guidelines for how the independent and dependent variables should be correlated. To ascertain the connections between personality component dimensions, moral leadership, and unproductive work behaviours, correlational analysis was carried out. The results are summarized in Table 3 and will be evaluated in accordance with [27]. A substantial and positive link between unproductive work behaviors and all five personality factors, including ethical leadership, was shown to exist ($r=.576$, $p, p0.00$; $r=.350$, $p, p0.00$; $r=.740$, $p, p0.00$; $r=.431$, $p, p0.01$; $r=.253$, $p, p0.01$; $r=.256$, $p, p0.01$, respectively). These positive relationships have signified that the greater the scores on extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness and ethical leadership the greater the scores on counterproductive work behaviours among support staff UiTM Selangor. These findings are supported by [13] who found that personality factor may affect both counterproductive work behaviours among doctors in Pakistan. It can be concluded that personality factors can

influence counterproductive work behaviours among support staff.

Table 3. Correlation between Personality Factor and Ethical Leadership on Counterproductive Work Behaviours

No		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Extraversion	(.805)						
2	Agreeableness	.543**	(.710)					
3	Conscientiousness	.797**	.402**	(.738)				
4	Neuroticism	.559**	.255**	.614**	(.810)			
5	Openness	.612**	.261**	.592**	.396**	(.915)		
6	Ethical Leadership	.295**	.087*	.386**	.280**	.253**	(.764)	
7	Counterproductive Work Behaviours	.576**	.350**	.740**	.431**	.253**	.256**	(.910)

Notes: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); Cronbach's alpha values in the parentheses along the diagonal

4.3 RQ 3: Which dimensions of personality factor and ethical leaders on predict counterproductive work behaviours among support staff at UiTM?

In order to identify the determinants of unproductive work behaviours among support workers at UiTM Selangor in Malaysia, multiple regression analysis was used. The findings are shown in Table 4. It was discovered that all of the personality characteristics and ethical leadership components together account for 93.5% of the variation in unproductive work behaviours, with an R2 value of .930. The findings have shown that agreeableness is the most influential factor towards counterproductive behaviours among support staff in Malaysia ($\beta = 1.105$, $p < 0.00$). Secondly, ethical leadership and neuroticism are the second and third influential factors towards counterproductive behaviours among support staff ($\beta = -0.601$, $p < 0.00$; $\beta = -0.310$, $p < 0.00$, respectively). Thirdly, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness had positive influence on counterproductive work behaviours with ($\beta = 1.105$, $p < 0.00$; $\beta = 0.26$, $p < 0.34$; $\beta = 0.44$, $p < 0.17$, respectively). Lastly, another dimension extraversion is not a significant predictor of counterproductive behaviours among support staff in UiTM Selangor. Therefore, it can be concluded through these findings that only two out of six dimensions of personality factor and ethical leadership acted as the predictors of the study's dependent variable which is counterproductive work behaviours. As stated by [10] and [28], the personality factors of neuroticism and ethical leadership among support staff at UiTM Selangor would negatively affect their counterproductive behaviours. Those with high neuroticism and high ethical leadership are required to ensure low counterproductive work behaviours at the workplace.

Table 4. Multiple Regression Analysis between Dimensions of Personality Factor and Ethical Leadership on Counterproductive Work Behaviours

Respondents	Independent variables	Standardized Coefficients Beta
UiTM	Extraversion	.015
	Agreeableness	1.105**
	Conscientiousness	.026*
	Neuroticism	-.310**

Support Staff	Openness	.044*
	Ethical Leadership	-.601**
	R Square	.930
	F value	1672.679
	Sig. F Value	.000

5 Discussion

Practically, this study discovered that the dimensions of personality factor do not completely influence counterproductive work behaviours. Although only one dimensions of personality factor which is neuroticism that has negative influence on counterproductive work behaviours, but this study has generally proven that ethical leadership has been proven to be influential towards counterproductive work behaviours. These results are in line with those obtained in a study by [28], which linked neuroticism and ethical leadership to unproductive workplace behaviours. They believe that unproductive behaviours may be mitigated with the support of workers who exhibit neuroticism, extraversion, openness, awareness, and ethical leadership. Similar to how employees with extraversion, openness, and awareness contribute to the development of ethical leadership. The above is in line with research by Farrastama et al. (2019), who identified the impact mechanism of ethical leadership on counterproductive work behaviours from a multilevel approach. Employees are more able to recognise unethical actions when they see them because of the company's ethical atmosphere, as reported by Robinson and Bennet (1995). Studies by [29] and [28] corroborate this finding, showing that ethical leadership is correlated with positive results for businesses and their employees in areas such as job satisfaction, openness to raising concerns with management, creativity in problem solving, loyalty to the company, and morale all around. Additionally, social exchange theory's reciprocity principles are utilised to support this study's findings [30]. According to the guiding principles, when an employee firmly believes that another employee treated them well and fairly, they feel bound to act in accordance with the anticipated good behaviour. In accordance with the aforementioned, researchers discovered that because ethical leaders are fair and reliable, their followers will feel obligated to them. As a result, they will repay the favour by exhibiting the proper work behaviours (for instance, high levels of ethical behaviours) and ceasing to exhibit hostile behaviours (for instance, low levels of workplace deviance) [30].

6 Conclusion and Recommendation

Counterproductive work behaviours is referring to actions taken voluntarily by employees that are detrimental to their organizations(CWB-O) or people working in the organisations (CWB-P) [13]. Personality factor dimension which neuroticism and ethical leadership are clearly associated with counterproductive work behaviours, consistent with the previous study by [11]. As mentioned by [31] counterproductive behaviors at work include destroying company property, calling in sick when you're not sick, insulting another worker, and stealing something from the employer. People with strong personality traits and ethical leadership in organizations could make it less likely for people to act in ways that aren't helpful. At the same time, they are also more likely to enjoy a better quality of life, thus associated with fewer counterproductive work behaviours. Therefore, the present study provides two

recommendations based on the findings of this study with the aim to reduce counterproductive work behaviours as to make support staff feel happy both in their employment and personal life. The first recommendation is creating a purpose. It is suggested to support staff to find the purpose in life and build a life that is meaningful. Start to think about the legacy you would like to leave behind such as your spouse, parents, and children. As an example, they might find the reasons or goals why they need work productively. Setting clear objectives can help them reach their goals. Working toward your goals will give you a reason to get out every day, beyond earning money and it will lead you to reduce counterproductive work behaviours as you know what you are trying to achieve. The second recommendation is to improve your personality, it becomes easier for people to think positively and feel good about themselves. Spend several minutes to list down all the good things that could happen to you in the future when you avoid counterproductive work behaviours.

6.1 Theoretical Implications

In view of the findings in this study, since this study found that ethical leadership is the predictor of counterproductive work behaviours, The influence of moral leadership on unproductive work behaviours may be supported and explained by the Social Exchange Theory (SET), a significant theory [32]. SET focuses on the relationship between the employer and the employee. Because ethical leadership is incorporated to create the link with harmful work behaviours, SET has been validated and expanded. Additionally, it serves to emphasise the morally correct trade with organisations that provide fair compensation, job security, and employee teamwork while refraining from engaging in actions that impede the organization's expansion. A greater knowledge of how personality traits like extraversion, openness, awareness, agreeableness, and neuroticism affect academics at UiTM Selangor through organisational controls is also possible with the use of organisational control theory. This study expanded the idea by investigating the five personality components, such as extraversion, openness, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and neuroticism to explain the effect rather than restricting it to a few personality traits [33]. Secondly, this study found that ethical leadership negatively influences counterproductive work behaviours. As a result, Social Exchange Theory has been proven to be accurate since it was utilised to clarify the relationship between the two organisational components. Because it helped to explain the significance of personality traits and ethical leadership on counterproductive work behaviours among support workers at UiTM Selangor, the theory has been expanded.

6.2 Limitations and Future Research Directions

The design of the current study is its greatest strength since it allows for the direction of causation of relationships between personality traits and unproductive work behaviours among UiTM Selangor support personnel. The primary drawback of this study is that it only included support workers who are currently employed at UiTM Selangor as its participants. Additionally, because the researchers collected the data using a self-report questionnaire, they were unable to acquire a thorough understanding of the issues raised by each respondent. However, because the respondents engaged were not evenly represented by gender, the findings might not be generalizable. Due to this, it is anticipated that future studies will be conducted with a bigger sample size and equal representation from both genders. Moreover, future research can also be conducted on the other dimensions of personality factor instead of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness neuroticism and openness that contribute to

counterproductive work behaviours. Ethical leadership should be considered as a moderating variable since leaders with varying degrees of ethical practices are expected to moderate the employee engagement in counterproductive behaviours at the workplace.

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