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ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

Organization Culture and Employees' Personality Alignment: Reducing Counter-Productivity Among Early-Career Employees in India's Private Sector

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Abstract— A significant challenge with entry-level or early-career employees in today's time is the frequent misalignment between their personality and culture of the organization, which in turn may cause adverse effects to their work productivity. This study aims to address how can organizational culture be strategically managed to reduce counterproductive behavior and protect firm performance. The present research studies how personality traits and organization culture jointly impact deviant behavior in the organization, especially among early career employees working in the Indian private sector. A cross-sectional survey design was employed, drawing data from 349 early-career employees (experience of 0-2 years) working in private-sector organizations across India. Standardized measures of the Big Five personality traits, Perceived organizational culture, and counterproductive work behavior were administered. Data were analyzed using hierarchical multiple regression in JASP 0.18.3. Organizational culture emerged as a significant contextual predictor of CWB. Results also indicate that conscientiousness and agreeableness are negatively associated with counterproductive work behavior. The combined model explained substantial variance in counterproductive work behavior, underscoring the need of a supportive and empowering culture to reduce counter-productivity, as well as integrating individual personality dispositions and organizational context when examining workplace productivity among early-career employees. By shifting the focus from obstacles in productivity of newcomer employees to the importance of a culture driven adaptation, the findings offer ground for strategy integration for organizations seeking to cultivate cultures, design effective on-boarding programmes, and retain Generational Z and Millennial employees. This study contributes to the literature by offering an integrated personality–culture framework for understanding counterproductive work behavior in the Indian private sector. By focusing on early-career employees, the findings provide actionable strategies for recruitment, on-boarding, and culture-building initiatives aimed at mitigating dysfunctional workplace behaviors in emerging market contexts.

Index Terms— Counterproductive work behavior, Organizational culture, Personality traits, Early career employees, Indian private sector

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Introduction

Over the past few decades, researchers in organizational psychology have increasingly delved into the negative aspects of workplace dynamics. Increasing attention has been paid to the evolution of organizational behavior, especially Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB), because of its wide range of effects on organizations. The negative aspects of an organization are what can be termed as Counterproductive Work Behaviors (CWB). Counterproductive work behaviors can be defined as extra-role behaviors intended to cause harm to an individual or an

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organization, as opposed to centre - errand and authoritative citizenship behaviors (Sypniewska, 2020). Researchers have divided CWBs into two groups: The Counterproductive Work Behavior Individual (CWBI), which focuses on individuals, and the Counterproductive Work Behavior Organization (CWBO), which consists of various actions that focus on organizations (Aftab & Javeed, 2012). In addition to negatively impacting the workers in ways that reduce their viability, these activities harm the association by influencing its actions or resources (Zhang et al., 2023). Techniques like undermining, making nasty remarks, and alarming are examples of misuse of measurement (Azam et al., 2022). Workplace disobedience entails breaking rules and responsibilities, purposefully carrying them out improperly, falling short of expectations, slacking, and abusing the procedures (Baloch et al., 2018). Such counterproductive work behaviors are more than a theoretical concern; they are constantly associated with decreased productivity, high risk of turnover, reputational cost to organizations, as well as harming team citizenship. Thus, prevention, control, as well as prediction of such behaviors are essential to organizations (Ülbeği & İplik, 2025). Conventional theories suggest that Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB) and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) are two extremes of the same idea, or a two-dimensional structure that is mostly autonomous and negatively related. However, recent studies have shown that these associations are more nuanced than previously believed. There might occasionally be a weakly positive correlation between them (Searle, 2022). Organizational culture has been defined as the path to hierarchical greatness, with administrative capacity as the creator and executive of the said culture (Chalmers R. Marras & Brannan, 2025). Deciphering and understanding organizational culture are a significant for administrators and experts since it influences critical developments, usefulness, and learning at all levels (Aziza & Etikariena, n.d.). Counterproductive behaviors may be systematically shaped by underlying psychological processes and traits. Personality traits, which are stable dispositions, can further serve as predictors of individuals' counterproductive work behavior. The Big Five personality traits, namely, conscieniousness, agreeableness, neurocism, openness to experience, and extraversion, in relation to CWBs have been explicitly examined for years (Spector, 2011). Apart from this, Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB) usually involves overt actions like stealing and aggression or, conversely, more subdued, passive actions such as wilfully ignoring instructions, neglecting to finish duties, or completing work incorrectly. Since these kinds of problems can make it difficult for an organization to accomplish its goals, they usually have a negative impact on both individuals and the organization as a whole. It is possible that a person's personality plays a role in this matter. Unproductive behavior at work is significantly influenced by some of these five personality traits (Spector, 2011). Experts have reported empirical evidence-based tributes from the Five-Factor Model that predicts counterproductive work behavior. Three of the five model attributes, namely, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and emotional stability, i.e., low neuroticism are linked to various forms of counterproductive work behavior, according to previous studies (Kozako et al., 2013). Moreover, in a 2019 research it was reported that agreeableness negatively associated with workplace deviance, which implies aggreable employees show few relational issues (Pletzer et al., 2019), and conscientiousness aids in predicting reluctance to rebel against authorities and be obedient, with low conscientiousness tied to rule disregard. Moreover, conscientious individuals also depict high work engagement (Sun et al., 2024). Moreover, according to the scant research on the five major factors that contribute to counterproductive work behavior, personalities are the predictors of things like supervisor pressure, coworker performance failure, and organizational limits, including work behavior that is counterproductive (Jensen & Patel, 2011).

The current study aims to understand the role of organizational culture and personality factors among early career employees exhibiting counterproductive work behavior in the Indian private sector. In the India, workplace dynamics are influenced by cultural diversity, hierarchical structures, collectivistic social norms, rapid industrial growth, and shifting organizational expectations. These unique characteristics may alter how employees perceive rules, values, supervision, fairness, and acceptable workplace conduct. Therefore, findings derived from Western populations may not be fully applicable to Indian employees. While counterproductive work behavior has been the focal point of research for decades, it overlooks the growing importance of culture of the organization and the subjective traits of the individuals, which together may have a bigger impact organization strategy, productivity, and detainment of the employees. There is a need for context-specific empirical research that examines whether organizational culture and personality traits significantly predict counterproductive work behavior among newly recruited employees in India. Thus, this study aims to explore the combined influence of dispositional and contextual factors among private sector early career employees in India by studying the relationships between the features of Indian employees and their counterproductive work behavior.

Hypotheses

Keeping in view the aim and objectives of the study, the following are the hypotheses that were constructed:

H1: Personality trait-Agreeableness will predict counterproductive work behavior.

H2: Personality trait- Conscientiousness will predict counterproductive work behavior.

H3: Personality trait-Openness to experience will predict counterproductive work behavior.

H4: Personality trait-Extroversion will predict counterproductive work behavior.

H5: Personality trait- Neuroticism will predict counterproductive work behavior.

H6: Organizational culture will predict counterproductive work behavior.

Research Background

Personality and counterproductive work behavior

Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB) is an unethical activity that negatively impacts businesses and their members, leading to lower job satisfaction and productivity. A study that provided essential findings for understanding Counterproductive Work Behavior was conducted by Ibrahim et al. (2025). It offered a thorough understanding of the global landscape of CWB research, which may guide future studies and practical initiatives in this field. The study used Publish or Perish, VOS viewer, and Excel to conduct a thorough bibliometric analysis of 955 CWB papers from Scopus published between 1999 and 2023. The analysis revealed important themes, including demographics, emotional and psychological factors, and job-related characteristics, among others, in addition to identifying the current landscape, prominent publication sources, and influential articles. This indicates a notable interest among researchers in understanding the various aspects and consequences of CWB. Collaboration, replication, and knowledge development for future studies were highlighted by the bibliometric evaluation, which offered insightful information.

Given its capacity to affect the well-being and success of the person engaging in Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB), it is a noteworthy area of concern. Two parts of CWB were different: coordinated toward persons (CWB-P) and coordinated toward association (CWB-O). In light of this, study conducted by Kaya Özbağ et al. (2019) examines the relationship between counterproductive work behavior and five personality traits that are coordinated toward individuals and associations. It was hypothesized that counterproductive work behavior might be predicted by extraversion, emotional stability, agreeableness, openness to experience, and conscientiousness. Information gathered from employees was dissected using Partial Least Squares (PLS) in order to evaluate the outcome paths. The results indicated a negative effect of agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability on CWB-O; however, there was no significant relationship among extraversion and openness to experience to CWB-O. Similar results were found for CWB-P as well, with agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability signifying a negative effect and extraversion as well as openness to experience showing no relationship. The current study aims to understand whether the variables predict similar results in the Indian context, along with classifying the strongest predictors among the traits for total counterproductive work behavior, especially in early career employees.

In an analysis by Roth and Klehe (2025), the effects of psychopathy on workplace-related behavior were studied. This meta-analytic review (k = 166; N = 49,350) was based on social exchange theory and aimed to: (a) test the relationship between psychopathy and task performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and counterproductive work behavior; (b) distinguish between primary and secondary psychopathy and these behaviors; and (c) test for pertinent moderating influences by actor- and target-/exchange-partner factors. Both meta-analytic overall effects and meta-analytic structural equation modelling indicated that psychopathy significantly lowers task performance and organizational citizenship behavior and increases counterproductive work behavior, in contrast to earlier significant but weak meta-analytic findings. The impacts of secondary psychopathy were generally more noticeable than those of primary psychopathy. In addition to methodological considerations, moderator studies showed that associations differed by actor (age, organizational tenure, hierarchical level), but not by target. When taken as a whole, these results provide fresh and pertinent avenues for further investigation into the consequences of psychopathy in the workplace (Roth & Klehe, 2025).

A similar study was conducted by Thakur (2017), which investigated the relationship between the Big Five and Counterproductive Work Conduct (CWB) in the context of the assembly sector in Baddi, Himachal, among 300 manufacturing industry representatives. The contribution of each trait differed, with neuroticism contributing 6%, extraversion contributing 2%, conscientiousness contributing 11%, and openness to experience contributing 21% of the overall fluctuation for organizational-counterproductive work behavior, while for Interpersonal-Counterproductive Work Behavior saw a 18% total variance, with neuroticism contributing 13%, conscientiousness contributing 3%, and extraversion contributing 2%. The study also reported significant differences among male and female employees. This study underscores the difference in the variance explained by each trait and gender on counterproductive work behavior.

Another study with the objective to determine whether or to what extent the main demographic traits of workers moderate the potential impact of the personality traits extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience on Counterproductive Work Behaviors (CWB). A survey of 1,380 professionally engaged individuals in Poland was carried out to achieve the specific goal. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was utilized to examine the data. It was ascertained how specific personality types impact interpersonal and organizational CWB, as well as how those personality types impact CWB. The strongest predictors of interpersonal and organizational CWB were reported to be conscientiousness, agreeableness, and neuroticism. According to the subjective CWB categories, extraversion reduced abuse against others, neuroticism and conscientiousness reduced withdrawal, agreeableness reduced abuse against others, and openness to experience enhanced withdrawal. The demographic factors that were examined had a significant moderating effect on the pointed relationships; the most notable moderating effects were found among women, older people, people with greater job experience, and people in office or clerical positions (Szostek et al., 2022). This study highlights the complex interplay of demographics, personality traits, and counterproductive work behavior, supporting the current study's objective to examine personality traits among early career Indian employees in the private sector.

Counterproductive work behavior and organizational culture

Ehrhart and Raver (2014) examined the relationship between the overall functional and counterproductive actions of employees in a company, its culture, and environment. It distinguishes individual behavior from unit-level behavior, proposing a framework linking organizational culture and environment to unit-level behavior and organizational effectiveness. Given the prevalence and costs of Counterproductive Work Practices (CWBs), it becomes significant for workplace leaders to comprehend the causes of these activities. Gülerdi (2020) used Cameron and Quinn's OCAI to examine whether organizational culture and the Dark Triad predict perceived CWBs. Data from 308 middle-class employees revealed that Machiavellianism, Narcissism, and Psychopathy were significant predictors of perceived CWBs. However, organizational culture did not moderate these associations. Beyond the role and effects of personality traits, it is also imperative to understand the influence of organizational culture on Workplace Deviant Behaviors (WDB).

Di Stefano et al. (2019) investigated the relationship between Workplace Deviant Behaviors (WDB) and Organizational Culture (OC), positing that various OC types, which are based on the Competing Values Framework model which have an impact on WDB while taking the Big Five features into account. Adhocracy and clan cultures are linked to lower levels of WDB, according to data from 954 employees across 30 industries using a hierarchical linear modelling technique. Another study examined how Machiavellian corporate culture affects ineffective work practices in Chinese private enterprises. The findings of a three-stage grounded analysis of a single case indicate aspects of status orientation, control orientation, and poor trust. Workers display counterproductive job actions as a result of psychological contract violations, poor trust, and a perception of low organizational justice in this Machiavellian corporate environment. The study suggested the need for further empirical research and emphasises the importance of diverse leadership and organizational culture development (Zheng et al., 2017).

The frequency of Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB) among employees and its detrimental impacts on both individuals and companies have led to a significant surge in empirical research on Counterproductive Work Behavior in recent years. Despite the wealth of study on this subject, no thorough attempt had been made to present an integrated review showing how this body of knowledge has evolved. This study by Ülbeği and İplik (2025) aimed to examine the literature on CWB in order to pinpoint the most important works, prestigious academic institutions, the most active and frequently mentioned researchers, and groundbreaking research in the area. Bibliometric analysis was used to systematically explore the Web of Science (WoS) database for the period from 2001 to 2023. The results showed that interest in CWB is still showing a steady growing trend, especially in the fields of management, business, and psychology. According to the data, publications on Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB) have significantly increased since 2001. Based on publication and citation metrics, the USA has emerged as the most productive and influential country; this highlights the contribution of substantial research in the Western context in increasing productivity.

A recent bibliometric analysis of 466 papers that were collected from the Scopus database published between 2014 and 2024 with key clusters, prominent themes, and co-occurrence analysis were the main focuses of the Vos Viewer analysis. The findings revealed a notable rise in CWB publications, especially those released after 2020. The main focus of this study was CWB, as it was debated in the domains of accounting, management, and business, as well as other connected topics. Furthermore, when it came to citations and article collaborations on publications connected to CWB, the United States had the most. The findings also described a number of leadership, personality, and other behavior-related problems that were categorized into five major clusters (Arifiani & Sawitri, 2025). This points us to the need for more studies in Indian populations, especially among early career employees.

Methodology

Research design

The present study employed cross-sectional design. Data collection was carried out using standardized psychometric tools. Demographic characteristics were analyzed to attain a better understanding of the sample. Descriptive statistics and Hierarchical Regression were then conducted using JASP 0.18.3 to identify the associations between the variables of the study and fulfill the study objectives.

Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to choose the study's participants. The questionnaires were distributed to 400 initial participants; ultimately *N* =3 49 individuals accurately completed each of the survey and were included in the study. The attention-check questions, which determine if a participant is filling out the form intentionally, were included as well. Employees with a 0 to 2 years of experience in the from various departments and organizations were chosen for the study using the purposive sampling technique.

Inclusion criteria

- Individuals who are helpful for the investigation and those who are willing to give their consent.
- Individuals with employment experience of 0 to 2 years.
- Minimum Education: Completed 10th grade.

- Individuals working in Indian private sector.
- Able to use computer and mobile phone to fill the questionnaires.

Exclusion criteria

- Individuals who are not willing to give consent.
- Individuals diagnosed with any other mental ailment.
- Individuals who did not fill the form correctly.

Tools

Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (CWB-C)

Counterproductive Work Behavior-Checklist measures a wide spectrum of Counterproductive Work Behavior. Participants were asked to indicate how ofen they had done each of the behaviors in their present job on a 5-point Likert scale. 1 represented ”never” and 5 represented ”every day.” This scale consists of five subscales: Abuse (nine items), Sabotage (three items), Production Deviance (three items), Then (five items), and Withdrawal (four items). The scale’s overall reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) is stated to be .84, demonstrating the scale’s dependability and high level of internal consistency (Spector et al., 2006).

Big Five Factor Inventory (BFI)

The 44-item Big Five Personality Inventory was first used to measure five personality qualities. Neuroticism, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and openness to new experiences are the five primary personality qualities measured by this test. A five-point Likert scale was used to express the responses, with 1 denoting ”strongly disagree” and 5 denoting ”strongly agree.” The five personality traits—extraversion, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and openness to new experiences- have Cronbach’s Alpha values of 0.560, 0.580, 0.586, 0.550, and 0.656, respectively (John & Srivastava, 1999).

Organizational Culture Assessment Questionnaire (OCAQ)

Organizational culture was evaluated with the Organizational Culture Assessment Questionnaire (OCAQ) created by Sashkin and Rosenbach (1996). The OCAQ is a self-report tool consisting of 30 items that evaluates employees’ views on how well their organization executes five functions deemed crucial for ongoing effectiveness. The OCAQ has reported satisfactory internal consistency throughout its five dimensions, with Cronbach’s alpha values ranging between α= 0.81 - 0.84.

Ethical considerations

To guarantee that the study was carried out and finished in an ethical way, the following actions were taken:

1. It was immediately made clear that participation in the study was completely voluntary on the informed consent form.
2. During the data collecting process, participants were made aware that they were free to stop answering questions and leave at any time without providing a reason.
3. Only after obtaining their signed informed consent were the individuals allowed to participate in the study.
4. The potential participants were informed about the nature of the task they were expected to do so they may decide whether or not to participate.
5. The identities of the participants, their institutions, and the information gathered were all kept completely secret.
6. Standardized psychological tools were used, data was analysed in a way that could be independently confirmed, and all participants got the same instructions and administration in order to guarantee the highest level of objectivity in the study.

Results

Data analysis

Once data were gathered, raw scores were obtained from the Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (CWB-C), the Big Five Factor Inventory (BFI), and the Organizational Culture Assessment Questionnaire (OCAQ). First, descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the scores for each scale, along with demographic information about the population. Second, Hierarchical Linear Regression analysis was performed to test the hypotheses of the study. The analysis was carried out by using JASP 0.18.3 software.

Table I
Demographic characteristics for participants *n* = 349

Characteristic	Category	*n*(%)
Age groups	18–21 years	133(38.10%)
	22–25 years	194(55.60%)
	26-32 years	22 (6.30%)
	Mean	22.31
Gender	Female	208(59.50%)
	Male	141(40.50%)
Education Qualification	Graduation	200(57.30%)
	Post-Graduation	147(42.12%)
	Post Doctorate	2(0.58%)
Current classification in organization	Lower Management	123(35.24%)
	Middle Management	152(43.55%)
	Upper Management	27(7.73%)
	Other Clerical Class	47(13.48%)

Table I demonstrates the demographic characteristics for *n* = 349 participants. The age group of participants with 0-2 years of employment experience in a private company in India was between 18 years to 32 years. 38.10% participants aged between 18 to 21 years, 55.60% i.e. the largest cohort of participants aged between 22 to 25 years old and a small percentage (6.30% aged between 26 to 32 years. The mean age of study participants was noted to be M = 22.31. A total of 208 (59.50%) participants were female, while 147(40.50%) were male. In respect to education qualification, 200 (57.30%) participants were Graduates, while 147 (42.12%) participants had completed their Post-Graduation. Lastly, classification of participants based on their role in the organization encompassed 123 (35.24%) working in lower management roles, 152 (43.55%) working in middle management, 27 (7.73%) working in upper management, and 47 (13.48%) working in other clerical tasks.

Table II
Descriptive statistics for *n* = 349

	Extroversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Neuroticism	Openness	Total CWB	Total (OCAQ)
Mean	25.928	33.003	31.691	24.410	32.095	55.507	102.278
Std. Deviation	5.114	5.087	5.157	4.499	4.226	24.936	15.387
Minimum	10.000	17.000	18.000	12.000	19.000	32.000	49.000
Maximum	40.000	45.000	45.000	39.000	44.000	156.000	141.000

Table II consists of the means, standard deviations, and score ranges for each of the variables of Extroversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, Openness, Total Counterproductive work behavior, and Total organizational culture for the participants (*n* = 349). The sample's mean scores showed moderate to comparatively high levels of personality traits. The Big Five traits with the highest average scores were Agreeableness (M = 33.00, SD = 5.08) and Openness to Experience (M = 32.09, SD = 4.22), indicating that participants generally thought of themselves as cooperative, tolerant, and open to new experiences. Additionally, conscientiousness showed a comparatively high mean (M = 31.69, SD = 5.15), suggesting that the sample had sufficient levels of accountability, organization, and self-control.

Conversely, among the personality traits, neuroticism had the lowest mean score (M = 24.41, SD = 4.50), indicating that the participants' negative affectivity and emotional instability were relatively low. The moderate mean of extraversion (M = 24.41, SD = 4.99) indicated average levels of assertiveness and sociability. Although CWB was present in the sample, it was not overly high overall, as indicated by the moderate mean score for Counterproductive Work Behavior (M = 55.50, SD = 24.93). Organizational Culture (OCAQ) showed a relatively high mean (M = 102.27, SD = 15.38), reflecting a generally positive perception of organizational values, norms, and practices. The sample was sufficiently heterogeneous for all variables.

Table III
Hierarchical regression *N* = 349

Model	*R*	R^2	Adjusted R^2	RMSE	ΔR^2	ΔF	df1	df2	*p*
Model 1	.563	.317	.307	20.759	.317	31.823	5	343	< .001
Model 2	.576	.332	.321	20.554	.015	7.894	1	342	.005

Model 1 includes Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness. Model 2 adds organizational culture (Total OCAQ).

Table IV
Analysis of variance for hierarchical regression models predicting total counterproductive work behavior

Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	*F*	*p*
Model 1	Regression	68,569.008	5	13,713.802	31.823	< .001
	Residual	147,814.224	343	430.945		
	Total	216,383.232	348			
Model 2	Regression	71,903.831	6	11,983.972	28.367	< .001
	Residual	144,479.401	342	422.454		
	Total	216,383.232	348			

Model 1 includes Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness. Model 2 adds organizational culture (Total OCAQ). *N* = 349.

As seen in the above table III to VI, a two-step hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to examine the personality traits and organizational culture as predictors of Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB). The five personality traits were entered in Model 1, and Organizational Culture (OCAQ) was added in Model 2. It was noted that Model 1, consisting of the personality traits, was significant, with $F(5, 343)= 31.823$, $p<.001$, and personality traits explained 31.7% of the variance in counterproductive work behavior ($R^2 = .317$). Extraversion was a noted to be a positive predictor (β =.113, p =.025), and agreeableness (β = −.362, p <.001), conscientiousness (β = −.182, p =.001), and openness (β = −.169, p =.001) were significant negative predictors. There was no significant relationship between neuroticism and CWB (β =.038, p =.444).

Table V
Regression coefficients predicting total counterproductive work behavior

Model	Predictor	*B*	SE	*β*	*t*	*p*
Model 1	(Intercept)	154.560	13.770		11.224	< .001
	Extraversion	0.550	0.244	.113	2.254	.025
	Agreeableness	−1.775	0.276	−.362	−6.435	< .001
	Conscientiousness	−0.880	0.273	−.182	−3.223	.001
	Neuroticism	0.213	0.278	.038	0.766	.444
	Openness	−0.999	0.304	−.169	−3.289	.001
Model 2	(Intercept)	162.220	13.904		11.667	< .001
	Extraversion	0.502	0.242	.103	2.072	.039
	Agreeableness	−1.701	0.274	−.347	−6.200	< .001
	Conscientiousness	−0.653	0.282	−.135	−2.313	.021
	Neuroticism	0.241	0.276	.044	0.876	.382
	Openness	−0.767	0.312	−.130	−2.461	.014
	Total (OCAQ)	−0.236	0.084	−.146	−2.810	.005

B = unstandardised coefficient; SE = standard error; *β* = standardised coefficient; OCAQ = Organizational Culture Assessment Questionnaire. *N* = 349

Table VI
Bootstrapped result for regression coefficients predicting total counterproductive work behavior

Model	Predictor	*B*	Bias	SE	pa
Model 1	(Intercept)	154.638	0.111	12.838	< .001
	Extraversion	0.551	3.610 × 10−5	0.188	.002
	Agreeableness	−1.779	−0.013	0.253	< .001
	Conscientiousness	−0.876	−1.403 × 10−4	0.217	< .001
	Neuroticism	0.216	0.007	0.272	.432
	Openness	−0.999	0.006	0.260	< .001

Cont...

Model	Predictor	*B*	Bias	SE	pa
Model 2	(Intercept)	162.461	0.191	13.590	< .001
	Extraversion	0.501	0.002	0.188	.007
	Agreeableness	−1.709	−0.013	0.259	< .001
	Conscientiousness	−0.654	2.298 × 10−4	0.231	.005
	Neuroticism	0.242	0.006	0.266	.350
	Openness	−0.761	0.008	0.257	.004
	Total (OCAQ)	−0.238	−0.002	0.079	.003

Bootstrapping based on 10,000 replicates. Coefficient estimate is based on the median of the bootstrap distribution. *B* = unstandardized coefficient; SE = standard error.

Model 2's explained variance was noted to be significant when organizational culture was included (ΔR^2 =.015, ΔF(1, 342) = 7.894, *p* =.005). It accounted for 33.2% of the variance in CWB (*F*(6, 342) = 28.367, *p* <.001). Regardless of personality, organizational culture was a significant negative predictor (*β* = −.146, *p* =.005), meaning that workers who thought their company had a better culture reported lower CWB. To assess robustness, bias-corrected bootstrap was computed from 10,000 resamples as seen in Table VI. The bootstrapped coefficients were similar to the original estimates, bias was negligible for all predictors, and all results in regards to significance were unchanged.

Discussion

To examine how the Big Five personality traits, along with organizational culture, predict Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB), a hierarchical regression analysis was employed in the current study. The results indicated that the strongest predictor of counterproductive behavior among early career employees was the personality trait of agreeableness even after addition of organizational culture. It was negatively related to counterproductive work behavior at p <.001, which indicates that employees with low agreeableness indicate high counterproductive behavior (CWB). Thus, H1 was accepted. The results were also evidenced in a 2023 study, wherein a meta-analysis was conducted upon 266 studies, which reported that agreeableness is the second strongest among the Big Five traits to predict CWBs (Miao et al., 2023). Agreeable individuals are known to be sensitive to others needs, being empathetic and cooperative thus, the likelihood of them harming the organization or their co-workers is reduced (Spector, 2011).

The trait of conscientiousness is reflected in a strong sense of duty and self-discipline. It was noted that conscientiousness had a significant negative correlation with Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB) at *p* = .021, aligning with H2. It has been previously suggested that conscientious employees view counterproductive behavior as incompatible with their own sense of duty and thus adhere to organizational rules more responsibly. In a meta-analysis, it was reported that conscientiousness in fact had the largest negative effect on CWB from the big five traits (Miao et al., 2023). H3 stated an association among counterproductive work behavior and openness to experience which was accepted with p=.014 indicated openness to experience to be a modest predictor of CWB. H4 posits that extra version will predict CWB. It was noted that extra version was small significant predictor, with *p* = .039, thus accepting the hypothesis. While openness to experience implies flexibility and willingness to try new things, extra version is the trait of being sociable and enthusiastically enjoy interactions. Previous research indicates that openness to experience and extra version have weak associations to counterproductive work behavior (Szostek et al., 2022), a pattern also observed in the current study as well. Neuroticism involves negative affectivity and emotional instability, which was hypothesized to predict CWB; however the same was not supported by regression analysis, thus rejecting H5. Neuroticism was not seen as predictor of counterproductive work behavior, findings that did not align with previous studies. Meta-analysis reported that neuroticism was the only trait from big five to be associated with positively with CWB (Miao et al., 2023).

Lastly, organizational culture was stated to be a predictor of counterproductive work behavior in H6, which was reported in the results, which found organizational culture to be a significant predictor of CWB at *p* = .005. Organizational culture is defined through shared norms and values, perceptions, and leadership behaviors. In a recent study, it was suggested that CWB is positively associated to toxic leadership (Ahmed et al., 2024). This indicated that fair leadership practices and enhanced culture can mitigate counterproductive behavior. The total variance of the predictors was noted to be 33.2%, which implies that counterproductive behavior is heavy influenced by traits of personality and culture of organization. As the present study focuses specifically on early career employees underscores that personality traits and organization culture are the heavy influencing and predicting factors of counterproductive work behavior for the new comers and current new age employees specifically joining the private corporate sector in India. These results provide a nuanced understanding on reduction of adverse behaviors and loss of productive in Indian private organizations. A number of theoretical frameworks are relevant to these findings. According to trait activation theory, personality traits show up in behaviors when situational cues are strong. As a result, neurotic people are sensitive to stress, while conscientious and agreeable employees flourish in ethical cultures. According to social exchange theory, while injustice or cynicism led to retaliation, fair treatment and positive leadership foster reciprocity, which lowers CWB (Ahmed et al., 2024). The results from our study parallel such findings, especially for young early career employees.

Implications

- It may be essential for companies to strategize their recruitment strategies by considering validated personality assessments to identify potential candidates with higher conscientiousness and agreeableness. The findings of this study indicate that these traits are the strongest negative predictors of counterproductive work behaviors.
- The study also demonstrated that, for employees the perception of the organizational culture is significantly predicted by counterproductive work behavior. Thus, integration of a supportive culture and leadership in the organization may result into reduced counterproductive work behavior.
- The results have also suggested that conscientious employees may engage in deviant behavior if the organization culture tolerates such acts. This underscores the need to structure the organization hierarchies and culture in a way that it adheres to set protocols for such behavior.
- Since the study found that personal dispositions and perceived culture together are responsible for the variance in counterproductive work behavior, organizations should integrate culture fit assessments, on-boarding programmes and consistent feedback to reinforce desired behaviors.
- Explicit communication of norms in the organization aids in shaping expectation of employees; thus, for newcomers in the firm, a tailored mentoring may support in reduction of uncertainty and lower risk of counterproductive work behaviors.
- In contrast to Western environments, India's private sector may have hierarchical structures and competitive forces. The findings suggest that a "one-size-fits-all" strategy for lowering CWB might not be effective; instead, HR policies should take Indian cultural norms and legal frameworks into consideration when creating interventions.
- Deviant behaviors might still be triggered by stress, perceived unfairness, or misfit, even after hiring conscientious people. Refresher training, anonymous reporting methods, and routine surveys can all assist in identifying new problems and strengthening cultural norms before they become deeply ingrained.
- By investing in supportive social groups, a thorough onboarding procedure, and focusing on newcomers with 0-2 years of experience, the organization may benefit in a long term association with the employee. This may act as a preventive measure to future deviant acts. Moreover, initiatives that improve cooperation, peer recognition, and team cohesion can also serve as preventative measures.
- When taken as a whole, these implications show that reducing unproductive work practices necessitates a comprehensive strategy that includes cautious hiring, a positive workplace culture, moral leadership, and continuous assistance for early-career staff members.

Limitations

When evaluating these results, a number of limitations should be taken into account.

- Purposive, non-probability sampling was used to recruit participants, which, together with the study's focus on a single country setting, restricts the generalisability of the results beyond early-career workers in the Indian private sector.
- It should be noted that variables like age, gender, educational background, or organizational position may influence the associations examined in the study, because demographic traits have been regarded as descriptive sample features rather than covariates.
- Future research would benefit from multi-source designs that include supervisor or peer ratings, as self-reports of one's own unproductive behavior are still prone to social desirability bias and likely underreporting.
- Lastly, the cross-sectional design prevents causal inference because reciprocal effects cannot be ruled out and the temporal ordering of these correlations cannot be determined.

Conclusion

The current study investigated personality traits, namely, agreeableness, openness to experience, extraversion, neuroticism, and conscientiousness, along with organizational culture as predictors of counterproductive work behavior among early career Indian employees in the private sector. The results indicate that agreeableness and conscientiousness are strongly associated and negatively predict counterproductive work behavior. This means that counterproductive work behavior increases as these traits decrease. Openness to experience and extraversion exhibit small negative and positive associations, respectively, indicating that they are modest predictors of CWB. Lastly, neuroticism was not found to be a significant predictor. Organizational culture was seen as a strong influential predictor in the study, which implies that the more promotive and better culture, there is a substantial reduction of counterproductive behaviors at work. Our findings are consistent with an increasing amount of recent research showing that CWB is fuelled by politicized environments and inadequate leadership. Organizational cynicism has a medium positive association with CWB, and fair, supportive practices lower it, according to meta-analytic evidence (Civilidağ et al., 2025). Research on abusive supervision shows that the relationship between supervision and CWB is mediated by views of organizational politics, defensive silence, and emotional exhaustion (Li & Xu, 2025). Furthermore, while kind and moral leadership reduce CWB, Machiavellian leadership raises it through perceived abusive supervision (Qiu et al., 2025). The Big Five traits interact with contextual factors through social exchange and conservation-of-resources

mechanisms, according to the theoretical implications. There are numerous practical implications for strategic management in organizations. Organizations should hire people based on their conscientiousness and agreeableness, train them in stress management and emotional intelligence, and keep an eye out for social overload in extraverted workers. Leaders in organizations need to set an example of moral behavior, make just decisions, and promote inclusive cultures. Interventions that improve organizational identification and lower stress include open communication, equitable compensation schemes, and corporate social responsibility. By moderating job demands, improving job resources, and formalizing guidelines to reduce uncertainty, digital platforms should strike a balance between algorithmic efficiency and human support. CWB can be further reduced by addressing toxic leadership, promoting trust in leaders, and discouraging gossip. Overall, reducing counterproductive work behavior requires an integrative approach that considers both individual dispositions and organizational context.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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