

Conceptualising Negative Workplace Impact on Employees' Innovative Behavior in Educational Enterprises

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history

RECEIVED: 16-Oct-23

REVISED: 15-Nov-23

ACCEPTED: 25-Nov-23

PUBLISHED: 01-Dec-23

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Citation: Da Fang, Geetha Subramaniam and Gooi Leong Mow (2023). Conceptualising Negative Workplace Impact on Employees' Innovative Behavior in Educational Enterprises. *Horizon J. Hum. Soc. Sci. Res.* 5 (2), 149–158.

<https://doi.org/10.37534/bp.jhssr.2023.v5.n2.id1228.p149>



ABSTRACT

This study aims to formulate a conceptual framework to identify the factors that impact the innovative behavior of educational enterprise employees. This paper uses a conceptual method i.e. utilizing gathering and analyzing extant literature from online and offline materials related to innovative behaviors and other relevant subjects in educational enterprises. Because of the impact brought by the COVID-19 pandemic and the implementation of the Double Reduction Policy that targeted educational enterprises in China, workplace ostracism, compulsory citizenship behavior, and perceived job insecurity negatively influence educational enterprise employees' innovative behavior. The study hopes to provide an outlook on the behavior of educational enterprises by investigating the impact of workplace ostracism, compulsory citizenship behavior, and perceived job insecurity on the innovative behavior of educational enterprises. By discussing the factors which impact employee innovative behaviour, a conceptual framework is proposed for an empirical study to be done soon. It is critical as the findings can be used to improve the quality of life of the teachers as well as the quality of teaching in the educational enterprises which is in line with SDG 4.

Keywords: workplace ostracism, compulsory citizenship behavior, perceived job insecurity, innovative behavior, educational enterprise employees, COVID-19, SDG 4

1. Introduction

Innovation is essential to the growth of all businesses (Tu, Cheng, & Liu, 2019), especially in the uncertain business field of today, and innovations have been viewed as fundamental to prosperity (Hansen & Pihl-Thingvad, 2019). Due to the bottom-up innovation model, in which the importance of innovative behavior of employees in

organizations has been emphasized (Pieterse et al., 2010), a lack of innovative employee behaviors inevitably leads to organizational failure (Ibrahim et al., 2018). Therefore, the innovative work conduct of an organization's members is crucial for attaining competitive advantage and ensuring its long-term survival.

However, because of the uncertainty of the corporate climate, fierce competition in the global market, and the sudden COVID-19 pandemic in China, organizations have undergone a substantial transformation. For instance,

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educational enterprises are under intense pressure to innovate (Zhang & Bray, 2021) due to COVID-19 and the Double Reduction Policy.

It is noted that educational employees experienced an increased level of unemployment due to the lockdown (Karani, et al., 2022). Furthermore, half of the employees are reported to feel ostracised at the workplace (Wang et al., 2023), which may cause serious problems, such as the feeling of well-being (Fatima et al., 2023), and counterproductive behavior (Ali Awad et al., 2023). Additionally, employees in educational enterprises reported feeling overburdened by endless overtime work (Yang, L. et al., 2023), which is one aspect of compulsory citizenship behavior.

Prior studies have examined a wide range of antecedents that can obstruct innovative behavior (Shalley et al., 2004). And perceived job insecurity, workplace ostracism, and compulsory citizenship behavior are prominent in the current society in China (Karani, et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2023; Yang, L. et al., 2023), especially in educational enterprises. However, there is a scarcity of research investigating the potential effects of workplace ostracism, compulsory citizenship behavior, and perceived job insecurity on innovative behavior among employees in educational enterprises. This condition was further aggravated after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the implementation of the Double Reduction Policy. Hence, the research gap is discussed in this study by examining the factors that contribute to innovative behaviors in educational enterprises. This paper discusses factors which impact employee innovative behaviour in educational enterprises with the aim of proposing a future empirical study.

2. Research Background

2.1 the Influence of Covid-19 on Enterprises Globally

In 2020, COVID-19 swept the whole world, causing serious problems for the global economy. According to IMF (2020), the developed countries experienced -6.1% growth rate while the developing countries, which normally perform well above the developed countries, plunged into -1.0% growth rate in 2020. If China has not been included, the rate will be lower at -2.2%. Besides, more than 170 countries were expected to shrink in income per capita. Hence, the pandemic has dramatically changed the economy and the workforce involved, so it is critical to explore what factors might hinder the innovative

impetus among enterprises in order to help the struggling industries to find a noble way for the survival from the damages of the pandemic.

2.2 Double Reduction Policy

The “Double Reduction Policy” mentioned in the official publication of the Chinese government refers to the “opinions on further reducing the burden of school work and off-campus training for students in compulsory education.” The main objective of the strategy is to reduce the excessive schoolwork load of children throughout the compulsory education period, including homework and out-of-school educational activities. (General Offices of the CPC Central Committee and The State Council, 2021). For educational enterprises with compulsory education-related business, the Double Reduction Policy has a great influence on their revenue and earnings (Yu, 2023), because the policy sets a price and time limit on the products of these companies and forbids capital investment in them. Therefore, there is a need to research the potential influence brought after the policy came into force.

2.3 Educational Enterprises in China

In 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, China’s K12 education market size was 762.9 billion yuan (Foresight Industrial Research Institute, 2020). According to the Training Education Committee of China Non-government Education Association (2020), more than 90% of educational enterprises lack confidence in business even after the lockdown. However, after the COVID-19 outbreak, traditional offline services provided by educational enterprises have been forced to quickly move their classrooms to online platforms, which changed the traditional business model of these companies. This saw online education increase to 21.9 percent, and the market size of K12 online tutoring was about 168.7 billion yuan in 2020 (Foresight Industrial Research Institute, 2020). Under such serious conditions in the offline education service and fresh requirements for the newly changed model, traditional educational enterprises in China saw an urgent need to find new ways to face the difficulties.

2.4 Traditional Chinese Culture’s Influence

Chinese people share common characteristics such as “patience” and adhere to traditional cultural principles such as “return good for evil”, and “being strict with

oneself and forgiving others” (Zhu et al., 2017). These characteristics make people who have experienced workplace ostracism suffer more harm than others. Besides, Chinese people attach great importance to harmony and the ability of tolerance, and strive to reduce conflicts, so the frequency of overtime work is high (He et al., 2022). The same is true for employees in educational enterprises (Yang, L. et al., 2023). In China’s high-power distance culture, many companies manage their employees with high pressure to force them to take on extra work (Liu, Chow & Huang, 2019). Hence, the negative problems related to forced work are much more severe in China. Therefore, it is pertinent to conduct research to study this phenomenon.

3. Literature Review

3.1 The Conservation of Resources Theory (COR)

Hobfoll (1989) proposed the theory of Resource Conservation (COR) as a way to analyze the concept of stress. COR theory uses the concepts of resource acquisition and depletion to understand the behavior of employees in an organizational environment, thereby measuring and delineating abstract and total stress. When people realise that resources may run out, they feel overwhelmed and anxious (Hobfoll, 1989). Employees are driven by natural tendencies to try to protect the resources available to them. When employees feel that they lack the necessary tools to meet job requirements, they may become emotionally exhausted, which may affect their work performance and creative behavior (Ding & Quan, 2021).

3.2 Social Exchange Theory

The social exchange theory proposed by Blau (2017) is a behaviorist social psychological framework that emphasizes the importance of psychological factors in shaping human behavior. This view emphasizes the idea that all human activities depend on certain motives. When individuals engage in interpersonal communication, they expect to gain benefits from their peers. The credibility of these returns depends on the ability of the other party to perform their duties. Social exchange theory and the principle of reciprocity can be embodied in the way people interact with each other and can also be applied to other organizations (Gouldner, 1960).

This means that there is a principle of reciprocity between employees and the organisation. If employees perceive

the organisation’s care for them, they are willing to work actively and repay the organisation. If employees cannot perceive care from organisations, they are not willing to conduct behaviors that go beyond the duties of his or her position. Innovative behaviors, as a beneficial force for institutions, are the positive actions of employees beyond duties in work towards organizations. Therefore, social exchange theory is applied to explain the effect of PJI, WO, and CCB, which have negative impact on the perception of care from organisations, leading to the impacts on IB.

Thus, the use of social exchange theory can be expanded to reveal the negative workplace impact on innovative behavior in educational enterprises.

3.3 Innovative Behavior

The 1970s saw a marked upsurge in scholarly interest in the study of inventive behavior, which focused primarily on individuals. Researchers often measure the results of creative efforts. It is known that employees who exhibit creative thinking are actively involved in the creation and execution of new concepts in an organizational setting. On another note, the formation of team alliances is the result of individuals receiving peer help and support for new ideas, which is also an extension of their research on innovative behavior. Tierney and Farmer (2002) argued in their studies that complexity and highly challenging work are factors that lead to innovative behavior. When the demands on the job are high, it can be effective if employees perceive the ratio of effort to reward as fair. In this situation, employees are more likely to come up with innovative ways to reduce their workload (Janssen, 2000). From the leadership perspective (Alessa & Durugbo, 2021), empowered leadership, transformational leadership, entrepreneurial and ethical leadership, participative leadership, inclusive leadership and servant leadership have an impact on innovative behavior. From another perspective, friendly communication and a fun atmosphere also exert an influence on innovative behavior (Jing et al., 2021).

Based on past literature, we can see that innovative behavior in the workplace can be impeded or encouraged by the working atmosphere, the relationship between leaders and employees, and the work nature, etc. After the COVID-19 pandemic, working conditions and relationships in the workplace changed due to the lockdown policy, hence the need to examine workplace negative impact on innovative behavior.

3.4 Compulsory Citizenship Behavior

According to Zellars and Tepper (2002), compulsory citizenship behavior can be defined as the behavior of employees under external pressure rather than personal motivation to meet the expectations and requirements imposed by leaders and organisations. Several studies have explored the effects of compulsory citizenship behavior. Based on the principles of COR theory, we can assume that the lasting consequence is to use the resources initially allocated to work to facilitate the implementation of mandatory citizenship by employees. This, in turn, can lead to employee dissatisfaction (Golparvar & Taleb, 2016), which can have an impact on the overall advantages accumulated throughout the organisation. According to Hui et al. (2000), there is evidence to support the idea that organisational citizenship behavior can have a significant impact on weakening organisational citizenship and thus adversely affect job performance. In addition, studies have shown that employees may take unproductive actions to compensate for the resource consumption caused by the above situations. In recent academic research, compulsory citizenship behavior has been found to be associated with increased turnover intentions and social loafing (Yildiz & Elibol, 2021). There is also a link between compulsory citizenship behavior and group work stress, especially in the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak (Baydin et al., 2020).

3.5 Workplace Ostracism

Workplace ostracism refers to the perceived experience of being excluded or ignored by individuals within a shared work environment (Ferris et al., 2008). In contrast to other phenomena such as bullying, bad manners and social damage, workplace ostracism is primarily characterised by its overt and indirect nature, which can have harmful effects (Robinson et al., 2013). Regarding the investigation of the effects of ostracism in the workplace, the available literature indicates that this phenomenon can seriously affect the mental health of employees. There is a clear positive correlation between workplace conditions and the occurrence of unpleasant emotions such as depression and anxiety among employees (Ferris et al., 2008). In terms of job performance, ostracism in the workplace is associated with a variety of negative effects. These include an increase in personal retaliation, such as aggressive behavior, antisocial behavior, and counterproductive work behavior (Rajchert & Winiewski, 2016).

3.6 Perceived Job Insecurity

Job insecurity indicates a clear lack of job security. Sverke and Hellgren (2002), argue that perceived job insecurity does not necessarily indicate imminent job loss, but rather represents a person's subjective impression of the employment environment. Some previous research has shown that job insecurity can adversely affect a variety of outcomes. For example, Mantler et al. (2005) found a correlation between perceived job insecurity and stress. As a powerful stressor, job uncertainty has the potential to lead to a range of negative outcomes, such as emotional exhaustion, reduced well-being, reduced work attitudes, and impaired work performance (Wang et al., 2020). Furthermore, given the adverse effects of stress on an individual's cognitive function and self-control, the stress view suggests that job instability leads to decreased levels of creativity, incidents of interpersonal abuse, and participation in unproductive professional behavior (Probst et al., 2020). Moreover, perceived job insecurity was associated with an increase in emotional exhaustion, decreased happiness, and higher levels of anxiety and depression. These negative emotions caused by job insecurity can severely impact work attitudes and behaviors. In addition, job insecurity was found to be directly associated with behaviors and attitudes, such as decreased job engagement, increased turnover, and lower job performance (Shoss, 2017). These negative outcomes that perceived job insecurity bring might be closely related

3.7 Compulsory Citizenship Behavior and Employee Innovative Behavior

Previous research by He et al. (2018) has shown that the implementation of compulsory citizenship behavior can also lead to adverse outcomes. The implementation of mandatory citizenship among employees may increase the degree of politicization within the organization and lead to increased internal pressure among employees. As a result, this may exacerbate conflict between employees and organizations, ultimately contributing to negative employee behavior (Vigoda-Gadot, 2006). At the same time, this phenomenon also has a series of negative effects on individual attitudes and behaviors, such as job performance, satisfaction, burnout experience, and the overall political climate within the organization.

Compulsory citizenship behavior is more common in China than in other countries, as evidenced by the study by Zheng et al. (2020). This finding aligns with research

by Vigoda-Gadot (2006), which suggests that coercive civic behavior can induce job stress and burnout. Burnout is recognized as an important stressor and has been found to negatively affect work achievement (Crawford et al., 2010). In addition, it has been suggested that burnout impedes employees' creativity (Drafahl, 2020). The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory states that stress drives employees to adopt resource conservation behaviors with the aim of protecting their resources against possible future loss and depletion (Hobfoll, 1989).

Thus, compulsory citizenship behavior may adversely affect the performance of innovative behavior.

3.8 Workplace Ostracism and Employee Innovative Behavior

According to COR theory, people experiencing resource scarcity are likely to act defensively in order to safeguard existing resources and prevent further losses. Kiazad and Seibert (2014) claim that people who experience secular stagnation are likely to exhibit negative work behaviors as a result of resource loss, leading them to minimize resource consumption and avoid risk.

De Clercq, Haq, and Azeem (2019), argue that ostracism in the workplace leads to a significant squandering of resources as more adverse situations arise, such as worry. Due to the inherent limitations of available resources, workplace ostracism is a harmful phenomenon that can lead to resource depletion (Van Woerkom & Bakker, 2016). Inadequate resource allocation on the other hand may result in hindering the execution of other critical tasks within the professional domain, such as the generation of new ideas (Feng et al., 2019).

The potential for innovation failure poses significant risks to individuals in the workplace. Individuals are reluctant to invest energy in work where there is a risk of failure (Kiazad, Seibert, & Kraimer, 2014), especially when faced with limited resource allocation. This assertion is supported by Choi (2019), who also shows that the act of fostering creativity poses risks to resource conservation. Over time, the tendency not to allocate resources to labor is activated.

Ultimately, when employees experience workplace ostracism, their social ties are cut off. Unfortunately, a large number of indispensable resources in the professional environment are closely related to social interactions (Zhang & Kwan, 2015). In addition, engaging in creative work requires employees to have access to

job-related resources (De Clercq, Haq, & Azeem, 2019). As a result, individuals experiencing exclusion lack resources for innovation, which can lead to a decline in out-of-role behavior and job performance (Becuwe, 2021).

Besides, according to Mayer et al. (2012), unpleasant emotions play an important role in the association between adverse work events and employee behavior. In addition, it has been observed that when employees experience negative behaviors from their leaders, such as being ignored or dismissed, they may have adverse emotional reactions, including anxiety, distress, and anger, as a result of self-assessment (Yang & Diefendorff, 2009). Many studies have shown that reduced levels of belonging, self-esteem, control, psychological stress (Williams, 2001), emotional exhaustion, and hopelessness caused by workplace ostracism may affect an individual's creative behavior.

The presence of the individual psychological consistency effect gives rise to a phenomenon wherein an individual's emotions have an impact on their conduct. Hence, the presence of negative emotions resulting from work-related occurrences, particularly unpleasant events, can diminish proactive activities.

Furthermore, as posited by social exchange theory, the creative output of employees is subject to the influence of interpersonal interactions (Shalley, Gilson & Blum, 2009). It is evident that the creative abilities of employees are not just contingent upon a "hard environment" encompassing financial resources and equipment, but also depend on the conducive nature of the "soft environment" including the working conditions provided to employees.

3.9 Perceived Job Insecurity and Employee Innovative Behavior

According to the COR theory proposed by Hobfoll (1989), when individuals find that their resources are limited, they will be more inclined to adopt conservation methods to avoid further consumption of resources. Belschak and Den Hartog's (2009) conceptualisation of extra-role behavior, engaging in innovative behavior requires employees to generate, disseminate, and potentially utilise information while performing prescribed job duties (Chen et al., 2022). This places additional demands on an individual's resources for self-control. Therefore, employees are less inclined to participate in innovation behavior.

Raja et al. (2020) argue that the presence of epidemics induces job insecurity, which in turn adversely affects

work behavior in quantitative terms. Innovative behavior is considered to be one of the key job characteristics. Thus, insecurity over quantitative jobs (often referred to as fear of unemployment) may have an impact on an individual's innovative behavior.

Qualitative job insecurity refers to an expected reduction in valuable job characteristics related to the overall scope of the job (D. Wang et al., 2021). It is associated with work-related stress factors that lead to work attitudes, negative emotions, and work-related behaviors. Moreover, as Farroukh, Canaan Messarra, and Yunis (2023) have argued, qualitative job insecurity has the potential to have a beneficial impact on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). In addition, employee OCBs can have a significant impact on the internal mechanisms of organizational innovation by facilitating information sharing.

In short, job insecurity includes both quantitative and qualitative dimensions and has been found to have a significant impact on employees' work behavior (Raja et al., 2020). This includes displays of dissatisfaction and complaining, which in turn can adversely affect employees' motivation to engage in out-of-role behaviors (Belschak & Den Hartog, 2009) and other proactive behaviors, as postulates in resource conservation (COR) theory. In view of the fact that employees are important contributors to organizational innovation, it is imperative to conduct a comprehensive survey on the phenomenon of employee innovation behavior.

It is therefore reasonable to assume that the existence of perceived job insecurity may hinder innovative behavior.

4. Discussion

This conceptual paper aims to form a conceptual framework to elaborate on the relationship among compulsory citizenship behavior, workplace ostracism, perceived job insecurity, and innovative behavior. Based on the reviews of past studies, workplace ostracism, compulsory citizenship behavior, and job insecurity negatively influence educational enterprise employees' innovative behaviors. Seen from the aspect of theoretical contribution, this conceptual paper fills the gap that there is little literature explaining clearly how workplace ostracism, compulsory citizenship behavior, and perceived job insecurity have an impact on the innovative behavior of educational enterprise employees. From the aspect of practical implementation, understanding more about the antecedents of innovative behavior can be a stimulus to business success.

5. Conclusion

This paper uses a conceptual method, reviewing and analyzing extant literature from online and offline materials related to innovative behaviors and other relevant subjects in educational enterprises. It also proposes a potential conceptual framework that is meaningful for future exploration in a similar area. Besides, this has provided a fresh recognition of the antecedents of employees' innovative behaviors during COVID-19 and the Double Reduction Policy in China. It specifically focusses on whether compulsory citizenship behavior, workplace ostracism and perceived job insecurity can have an effect on innovative behavior of educational enterprises' employees.

In the future, there should be a more comprehensive study on the antecedents of innovative behavior in educational enterprises. The future research should also examine the mediating and moderating effects that might influence the relationship between compulsory citizenship behavior, workplace ostracism, perceived job insecurity, and innovative behavior of educational enterprises' employees.

6. Proposed Framework for Future Empirical Study

Based on the discussion of this study, the following conceptual framework is proposed. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the implementation of Double Reduction Policies, the innovative behavior of employees in education enterprises may be affected by negative workplace issues such as workplace ostracism, compulsory citizenship behavior, and job insecurity. This can be understood from the perspective of resource conservation theory and social exchange theory.

Some empirical studies should be conducted to examine what and how the negative factors mentioned above might impact the innovative behaviors of educational enterprise employees in China. A purposive sampling technique can be used to collect data using questionnaires distributed in China nationally since the pandemic and the Double Reduction Policy have had a huge impact on the whole nation. The proposed framework is as shown in Figure 1, below.

Acknowledgement

The authors wish to express their gratitude to the editors and editorial staff of JHSSR for their assistance during the publication period.

Funding

This research was supported from a research grant by SEGI University, Kota Damansara, Malaysia.

Declaration of Competing Interests

No competing financial or personal interests exist in reporting the results of the study.

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