

International Leadership Journal

Winter 2024
VOLUME 16, ISSUE 1

*A refereed, online journal
published thrice yearly by TST, Inc.*

IN THIS ISSUE

ARTICLE

Should We Actually Be Going Back to the Office?

Steven J. Lindner, Chloe Lindner, and Kenneth Levitt

PRACTICE

Practicing Wise, Warmly Assertive, Caring Teaching: A Practice-Oriented Leader Profile

Charles D. Kerns

CASE STUDY

Simba Global Partners: A Leadership Case Study

Kushna Shah, Deirdre Dixon, and Marca Bear

BOOK REVIEW

Review of *Elon Musk*

Anthony Biasello

International Leadership Journal

Contents

Volume 16, Issue 1, Winter 2024

From the Editor

Joseph C. Santora2

ARTICLES

Should We Actually Be Going Back to the Office?

Steven J. Lindner, Chloe Lindner, and Kenneth Levitt3

PRACTICE

Practicing Wise, Warmly Assertive, Caring Teaching: A Practice-Oriented Leader Profile

Charles D. Kerns..... 16

CASE STUDY

Simba Global Partners: A Leadership Case Study

Kushna Shah, Deirdre Dixon, and Marca Bear47

BOOK REVIEW

Review of *Elon Musk*

Anthony Biasello60

ARTICLE

Should We Actually Be Going Back to the Office?*

Steven J. Lindner
The WorkPlace Group

Chloe Lindner
Fordham University

Kenneth Levitt
Frostburg State University

The current study clarifies the direct impact of working from home, working from an office, or having a hybrid work arrangement on counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs) and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs). An analysis of 391 working adults showed no mean differences between OCBs and CWBs based on where they worked. Multiple linear regressions indicate that coworker support and supervisor support predict CWBs and OCBs. Workplace loneliness was also a significant predictor of CWBs. Implications of these results are discussed.

Keywords: counterproductive work behaviors, coworker support, hybrid work, organizational citizenship behaviors, supervisor support, work from home, workplace loneliness

All employers are concerned about counterproductive work behaviors and their negative impact on organizational productivity and performance. A recent CNBC article (Smith, 2022) indicated that 50% of businesses want or already require workers to return to the office full time, with others requiring hybrid work arrangements in which employees work part of the week from home and the remainder from the office. A survey of 20,000 people in 11 countries found that “85% of leaders say that the shift to hybrid work [and, by association, work-from-home arrangements] has made it challenging to have confidence that employees are being productive” (Microsoft, 2022, “1. End Productivity Paranoia” section, para. 2). Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Meta, announced that “an internal analysis of employee performance data suggests that engineers who work in person ‘get more done’” (Capot, 2023, para. 3). But does in-office work mitigate counterproductive work behaviors? In-office employees may be easier to manage

*To cite this article: Lindner, S., Lindner, C., & Levitt, K (2024). Should we actually be going back to the office? *International Leadership Journal*, 16(1), 3–15.

and observe, but just like working at home, employees can always look busy without being productive.

Organizations debating where workers should work—from home, in a corporate office, or a hybrid of the two—is centered on employee productivity and performance. Three domains of work performance are task performance, organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), and counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs; Yao & Fan, 2015). Research has shown that working from home does not necessarily result in less productive workers in terms of task performance (Maurer, 2020). However, research has shown that employees working from home struggle to exhibit OCBs and report elevated levels of CWBs (Wax et al., 2022). However, workers can be lonely at work—despite where work is performed.

Organizational citizenship behaviors refer to doing things that benefit the organization, such as helping coworkers with their deliverables and volunteering to take on responsibilities. Organ (1988) described OCBs as behaviors that are “discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and in the aggregate promotes the efficient and effective functioning of the organization” (4). *Counterproductive work behaviors* are “intentional employee behavior[s] that [are] harmful to the legitimate interests of an organization” (Dalal, 2005, 1241–1242). These dysfunctional behaviors violate the organizational norms and deviate from a company’s standard procedures and policies. They include behaviors such as working slowly or pretending to work, saying mean things to coworkers, taking long breaks, and complaining about insignificant work-related things. CWBs have two major dimensions based on the severity and target of the action. CWBs can include serious and dangerous deviant behaviors, such as sexual assault, as well as less serious actions, such as gossiping about a colleague. CWBs also can affect the organization’s or an individual’s well-being. When targeting an individual’s well-being, CWBs are sometimes referred to as interpersonal deviance. However, the two dimensions are highly correlated ($r = .62$), reflecting that CWBs impact both the individual and the organization (Kelloway & Barling, 2010).

Researchers have tried to understand how to predict CWBs. Kelloway and Barling (2010) argued that CWBs act as a form of employee protest. Based on the model of protest, employees display deviant behaviors to respond to a violation of moral or ethical standards. These individuals use these counterproductive behaviors in an attempt to restore justice and fairness. The authors note that this view is consistent with the classic work by Hirschman (1970), who stated that when individuals experience dissatisfaction, they have two choices: leave the situation or express their displeasure. Thus, employees protest if they feel a lack of loyalty or a decreased quality in their organization. In the case of CWBs, this results in a lack of devotion to an organization's success, a want to have grievances heard, and a need to voice displeasure in the form of deviant behaviors (Kelloway & Barling, 2010).

The need for loyalty in an organization can also be understood under the context of identification. Researchers have argued that employees are more likely to pursue CWBs when they do not feel they identify with their organization. The social identity perspective states that

the identification of employees with their organization has been conceptualized as a specific type of social identity through which individuals integrate their personal self-definition with their membership of an organization. Thus, the organizational identity becomes a part of their self-concept. (Ciampa et al., 2019, 120)

Ciampa et al. (2019) argued that a sense of identity in an organization drives CWBs. Thus, when employees feel connected to their organization, they are less likely to go against it. When individuals view themselves as a part of an in-group, they internalize the group's goals, follow organizational norms and standards, and treat fellow group members more positively (Ciampa et al. 2019). Research on employee–organization identity infers that it moderates CWBs; where organizational identity is high, CWBs are low.

Research by Palmer et al. (2017) explored the role of overall perceived organizational support on CWBs. *Perceived organizational support (POS)* is defined as “an employee's perception that their organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being” (Palmer et al., 2017, 31). High POS increases employees' commitment and enhances positive organizational outcomes (Palmer et al., 2017). When an employee feels appreciated and

experiences high levels of organizational support, CWBs are diminished. Vatankah et al. (2017) also found this relationship when studying 198 Iranian flight attendants. They observed that elevated perceptions of organizational support reduced the frequency of CWBs.

Based on the research stated above, it can be argued that when individuals feel displeased, unsupported, or lonely at work, they are more likely to demonstrate CWBs and less likely to exhibit OCBs. However, it is unclear whether these behaviors are more present when employees work from home, in an office, or in a hybrid work setting. Does work location matter when it comes to CWBs and OCBs? Accordingly, the current study sought to (a) clarify the direct impact of work location on CWBs and (b) unpack the potential moderating impact of supervisor and coworker support on CWBs and OCBs. Consequently, based on the research results, I propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: CWBs are not greater for those working from home, in-office, or in a hybrid work arrangement.

Hypothesis 2: OCBs are not greater for those working from home, in-office, or in a hybrid work arrangement.

Hypothesis 3: Workplace loneliness, coworker support, and supervisor support predict the magnitude of CWBs and OCBs independently of where work is performed.

Method

Sample

Participants were recruited primarily from a database of U.S. job candidates from a talent acquisition and development consulting company, but also partially from an alumni network from a small liberal arts college in Southern California and social media posts. From the database of U.S. job candidates, 33,140 candidates were contacted via a personalized email with a link to the survey. These individuals were selected based on the following criteria: (a) residing in the United States, (b) having updated their candidate record within the past five years, and (c) having a valid email address. The job candidates in the database include individuals who work in

various industries, such as manufacturing, finance, health, pharmaceuticals, consumer products, IT, and engineering. These candidates range from no work experience to mid and late-career professionals. This database includes individuals in both trades as well as professional occupations.

Five hundred and sixty-one survey responses were received. Of these responses, 391 completed surveys were usable for analysis. Responses eliminated from the final sample included: individuals who didn't respond to any questions ($n = 92$), individuals who were unemployed and had never previously been employed ($n = 51$), individuals who did not provide consent for their data to be used ($n = 15$), responses that came from the research group testing out the survey ($n = 11$), and one response that, based on respondent location and pattern of answers, appeared to be a duplicate response ($n = 1$). Of the 391 usable data points, all individuals were currently employed or had previously been employed. Of the participants, 74.68% worked in corporate offices, 16.62% worked had a hybrid work arrangement, 4.35% worked from home, and 4.35% did not specify. Participants reported working in a variety of industries, including education (18.93%), dining (11.25%), sales (9.21%), health care (9.21%), business (7.93%), and administration (6.39%). The average age of the participants was 32.41 years old ($SD = 15.90$). The gender breakdown was 66.24% female, 30.18% male, and 1.02% non-binary/third gender; .51% preferred to self-describe, .26% preferred not to say, and 1.79% provided no response.

Procedure and Methods

All data were collected via a web-based survey using Qualtrics, a software survey system. The following measures were used to capture conceptual variables in the current study.

Workplace Loneliness. Workplace loneliness was measured using Wright et al.'s (2006) 16-item scale. An example item is: "I often feel isolated when I am with my coworkers." Response options ranged from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7). Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.93.

Organizational Citizenship Behaviors. OCBs were measured using Smith et al.'s (1983) 16-item scale. Participants were instructed to respond about their own

behaviors. An example item is: “Makes innovative suggestions to improve the department.” Response options ranged from “very uncharacteristic” (1) to “very characteristic” (5). Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was 0.79.

Coworker and Supervisor Support. Perceptions of coworker support were captured using O’Driscoll et al.’s (2004) four-item scale. An example item is: “How often, over the past three months, have you received sympathetic understanding and concern from colleagues?” Response options ranged from “never” (1) to “all the time” (6). Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .92.

Perceptions of supervisor support were captured using Kottke and Sharafinski’s (1988) 16-item scale. An example item is: “My supervisor really cares about my well-being.” Response options ranged from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7). Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .96.

Counterproductive Work Behaviors. This variable was measured using the 10-item self-report checklist developed by Spector et al. (2006). The scale asks participants how often they participate in CWBs (e.g., complaining about insignificant things at work). Items are scored on a five-point scale from “never” (1) to “every day” (5). Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .97.

Results

All measured variables were deemed to be normally distributed. Descriptive statistics appear in Table 1, and Pearson correlations for variables examined to evaluate Hypothesis 3 are shown in Table 2.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Work Location+	301	2.76	0.52
2. Workplace Loneliness	301	46.03	17.42
3. Coworker Support	349	13.47	6.52
4. Supervisory Support	349	56.81	27.29
5. Organizational Citizenship Behaviors	301	62.18	8.83
6. Counterproductive Work Behaviors	349	13.59	3.85

Note. Work location was coded as follows: 1 = in-office; 2 = hybrid; 3 = home.

Table 2: Pearson Correlations

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Workplace Loneliness	—			
2. Coworker Support	-.384*	—		
3. Supervisory Support	-.183*	.653*	—	
4. Organizational Citizenship Behaviors	-.205*	.725*	.687*	—
5. Counterproductive Work Behaviors	.090	.500*	.507*	.533*

* $p < 0.001$

To evaluate Hypothesis 1, which stated that CWBs do not differ for those working from home compared with those working in a corporate office or a hybrid work arrangement, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. No significant differences in CWBs were found for these three groups, $F(2,298) = .897$, $p = 0.409$. Hypothesis 1 was supported.

To evaluate Hypothesis 2, which stated that OCBs do not differ for those working from home compared with those working in a corporate office or a hybrid work arrangement, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. No significant differences in OCBs were found for these three groups, $F(2,298) = 1.409$, $p = 0.246$. Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Hypothesis 3 was evaluated using multiple linear regression. This hypothesis stated that workplace loneliness, coworker support, and supervisor support predict the magnitude of CWBs and OCBs independently of where work is performed. Because the ANOVAs conducted to test Hypotheses 1 and 2 showed no mean differences in OCBs or CWBs based on where individuals worked, work location was not included as a moderator in the multiple linear regressions conducted. Workplace loneliness, coworker support, and supervisor support were regressed onto CWBs. Results showed that all three predictors were significant and explained 39% of the variance. The overall regression was statistically significant ($F(3, 345) = 73.290$, $p < .001$) with a R^2 of 0.389. The fitted regression model is $CWB = -.660 + (.375 * \text{coworker support}) + (0.57 * \text{supervisor support}) + (.098 * \text{workplace loneliness})$. Coworker support significantly predicted CWBs,

$t(345) = 7.393, p < .01$. Supervisor support predicted CWBs $t(345) = 4.968, p < .01$. Workplace loneliness also significantly predicted CWBs $t(345) = 6.830, p < .01$.

A second multiple linear regression was conducted to regress workplace loneliness, coworker support, and supervisor support onto OCBs. Results explained 61% of the variance with coworker and supervisor support as significant predictors. The overall regression was statistically significant ($F(3, 345) = 178.325, p < .001$), with an R^2 of .608. The fitted regression model is $OCB = 26.659 + (1.225 * \text{coworker support}) + (0.211 * \text{supervisor support}) + (.051 * \text{workplace loneliness})$. Coworker support significantly predicted OCBs, $t(345) = 10.674, p < .01$. Supervisor support also predicted OCBs, $t(345) = 8.185, p < .01$. However, workplace loneliness was not a significant predictor of OCBs, $t(345) = 1.579, p = .115$. Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Discussion

This study suggests employers focus on the wrong question regarding productivity and work arrangements. It is not a question of working from home versus working in a corporate office or some combination of both. It is a question of job design and organizational culture. Mandating or redacting work-from-home policies to bring people into the office is unlikely to enhance employee productivity or performance. Employees can be counterproductive regardless, resistant to exhibit OCBs, and, as suggested by Kelloway and Barling (2010) and others, may protest an employer's unfavorable change in policy.

The current study adds to our existing body of knowledge by examining the magnitude of OCBs, CWBs, and workplace loneliness across three common work arrangements: working from home, working from a corporate office, or having a hybrid work arrangement. A *hybrid work arrangement* is defined as working part of the week from home and the rest in a corporate office. Results show that where work is performed is insignificant. The magnitude of OCBs, CWBs, and work loneliness did not meaningfully vary across these three work arrangements. This is a notable result as OCBs and CWBs comprise two of the three domains of work performance. Past studies regarding the third domain, task performance, observed

that employees' levels of task performance are not contingent on whether they work from home or a corporate office (Wax et al., 2022).

The compilation of current research and the findings of this study suggest that worker productivity and performance are not a matter of where they work. Individuals' work arrangements did not affect their level of OCBs or CWBs. However, their perceived degree of support from coworkers and supervisors and their level of workplace loneliness did. In fact, 61% of the variance across respondents regarding OCBs could be predicted by these variables. A closer look at the results showed that workplace loneliness was not a significant predictor and had a negligible effect on OCBs. A review of the correlation matrix in Table 2 shows a moderate and significant positive correlation of .653 between perceived supervisor and coworker support. The fact that each significantly predicts OCBs indicates that each accounts for unique variance. While workplace loneliness was not a significant predictor of CWBs in this study, potential moderators could be at play given its negative and statistically significant relationship of $-.205$ with OCBs. This is an area for further exploration. Until then, what matters the most when it comes to boosting the magnitudes of employees' OCBs is their perceived levels of coworker and supervisor support.

Turning separately to CWBs, 39% of the variance in workers' levels of CWBs, regardless of work location, could be explained by their perceived degree of support from coworkers and supervisors and their level of workplace loneliness. In this case, all three of these variables were significant predictors. Workplace loneliness being a significant predictor of CWBs is noteworthy, particularly because its correlation with CWBs was not statistically significant (see Table 2). Potential moderators may be at play, and future research should explore this further. Similar to OCBs, findings suggest that lowering workers' CWBs is a matter of designing jobs and organizational cultures in which employees feel supported by coworkers and supervisors and experience lower levels of workplace loneliness.

This study has several limitations that are important to acknowledge. First, the study is based on self-reported survey responses and is subject to various biases, such as social desirability, that may influence response accuracy. For example,

employees may not want to accurately self-report their CWBs. Second, the sample may have issues of generalizability. Although our sample was diverse, it may not completely reflect the entire U.S. population of working adults. Future researchers are encouraged to study further the interactive effect of workplace environments on work-relevant outcomes using longitudinal, multi-methodological research designs with large, diverse samples of workers. Researchers should be encouraged to include objective measures of work performance domains to eliminate measurement bias.

The current study provides unique insights into how workplace loneliness and perceptions of coworker support and supervisor support deeply affect employees' OCBs and CWBs. Employee productivity and job performance are likely more contingent on designing jobs and work cultures that balance and optimize the interplay of task performance with variables that boost OCBs and minimize CWBs. Designing jobs and work cultures to strengthen employees' perceptions of support from coworkers and supervisors and lower their levels of workplace loneliness has a far greater effect on increasing OCBs and decreasing CWBs than decisions regarding working from-home, working from a corporate office, or some combination of both. Given this, future researchers should explore other predictors and moderators of OCBs and CWBs. While this study accounted for 61% of the variance in OCBs and 39% of the variance in CWBs, a significant amount of variance remains unexplained. Other factors are at play, and much can be learned through further inquiry.

References

- Capot, A. (2023, March 15). Mark Zuckerberg says Meta employees who work in person "get more done." *CNBC*. <https://www.cnbc.com/2023/03/15/mark-zuckerberg-says-meta-employees-who-work-in-person-get-more-done.html?recirc=taboolainternal>
- Ciampa, V., Sirowatka, M., Schuh, S. C., Fraccaroli, F., & van Dick, R. (2019). Ambivalent identification as a moderator of the link between organizational identification and counterproductive work behaviors. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 169(1), 119–134. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04262-0>

- Dalal, R. S. (2005). A meta-analysis of the relationship between organizational citizenship behavior and counterproductive work behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 90*(6), 1241–1255. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.90.6.1241>
- Kelloway, E. K., & Barling, J. (2010). Leadership development as an intervention in occupational health psychology. *Work & Stress, 24*(3), 260–279. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02678373.2010.518441>
- Kottke, J. L., & Sharafinski, C. E. (1988). Measuring perceived supervisory and organizational support. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 48*(4), 1075–1079. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013164488484024>
- Maurer, R. (2020, September 16). *Study finds productivity not deterred by shift to remote work*. SHRM. <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-news/pages/study-productivity-shift-remote-work-covid-coronavirus.aspx>
- Microsoft. (2022, September 22). *Hybrid work is just work. Are we doing it wrong?* (Trend Index Special Report). <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index/hybrid-work-is-just-work>
- O'Driscoll, M. P., Brough, P., & Kalliath, T. J. (2004). Work/family conflict, psychological well-being, satisfaction and social support: A longitudinal study in New Zealand. *Equal Opportunities International, 23*(1/2), 36–56. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02610150410787846>
- Organ, D. W. (1988). *Organizational citizenship behavior: The good soldier syndrome*. Lexington Books/D.C. Heath and Com.
- Palmer, J. C., Komarraju, M., Carter, M. Z., & Karau, S. J. (2017). Angel on one shoulder: Can perceived organizational support moderate the relationship between the dark triad traits and counterproductive work behavior? *Personality and Individual Differences, 110*, 31–37. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2017.01.018>
- Smith, C. A., Organ, D. W., & Near, J. P. (1983). Organizational citizenship behavior: Its nature and antecedents. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 68*(4), 653–663. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.68.4.653>
- Smith, M. (2022, March 18). *50% of companies want workers back in office 5 days a week—why experts say this strategy could fail*. CNBC. <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/03/18/50percent-of-companies-want-workers-back-in-office-5-days-a-week.html>

- Spector, P. E., Fox, S., Penney, L. M., Bruursema, K., Goh, A., & Kessler, S. (2006). The dimensionality of counterproductivity: Are all counterproductive behaviors created equal? *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 68(3), 446–460. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2005.10.005>
- Vatankhah, S., Javid, E., & Raoofi, A. (2017). Perceived organizational support as the mediator of the relationships between high-performance work practices and counter-productive work behavior: Evidence from the airline industry. *Journal of Air Transport Management*, 59, 107–115. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jairtraman.2016.12.001>
- Wax, A., Deutsch, C., Lindner, C., Lindner, S. J., & Hopmeyer, A. (2022). Workplace loneliness: The benefits and detriments of working from home. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 10, 903975. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.903975>
- Wright, S. L., Burt, C. D. B., & Strongman, K. T. (2006). Loneliness in the workplace: Construct definition and scale development. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, 35(2), 59–68. <http://hdl.handle.net/10092/2751>
- Yao, J., & Fan, L. (2015). *The performance of knowledge workers based on behavioral perspective*. *Journal of Human Resource and Sustainability Studies*, 3, 21–27. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jhrss.2015.31003>

Steven J. Lindner, PhD, is an organizational psychologist and human resources expert with The WorkPlace Group. His consulting work focuses on talent acquisition and human capital management. He earned his PhD in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from Stevens Institute of Technology and served on the Society for Human Resource Management's Talent Acquisition Expert Panel, providing expert opinions, guidance, and instruction to the human resources industry. He can be reached at Steven.lindner@workplacegroup.com.

Chloe Lindner is a school psychology doctoral student in the Graduate School of Education at Fordham University. She is a dedicated researcher specializing in psychology and education, with a profound commitment to advancing knowledge in her field. She has actively contributed to research projects focused on early childhood transitions and teacher preparation, showcasing her interest in developmental psychology and educational theory. Ms. Lindner's research interests span a diverse range of topics, from preschoolers' cognitive biases to the impacts of remote work on workplace dynamics, as evidenced by her presentations and publications in esteemed journals and conferences. Her dedication to rigorous inquiry and scholarly discourse underscores her commitment to shaping the future of psychology and education. She can be reached at clindner4@fordham.edu.

Kenneth Levitt, PhD, is an associate professor in the Department of Management at Frostburg State University. He has 25 years of college-level teaching experience in the areas of human resource management, leadership, and organizational behavior. Since starting at Frostburg in 2014, he has taught undergraduate courses in labor relations and collective bargaining, compensation, and business ethics and a graduate course in human resource management. In addition to teaching, Dr. Levitt's research has focused on factors

that influence workplace attitudes and performance, such as procedural justice, emotional intelligence, employee engagement, leadership, and personality. He also has extensive human resource consulting experience with The Gallup Organization and The WorkPlace Group. He can be reached at kjlevitt@frostburg.edu.