

## Behaviour Management in a Workplace: An Overview

Jnanamay Das<sup>1</sup>, Shailly Yadav<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

Human behaviour is the response of the individual to various stimuli. Work behaviour is the formal behaviour one uses in the place of work. Behaviour can range from normal or eccentric to abnormal types depending on the situations and circumstances. Employees often come across various types of abnormal work behaviour like counterproductive work behaviour, sexual harassment in the workplace and verbal abuse. These not only produce a decrease in work efficiency but also create a high level of anxiety and both mental as well as physical stress among the employees. They may even feel depressed, resign from the job or commit suicide. Intervention is needed when the behaviour is creating some problem within the individual or to others. Management depends on the individual matters as well as the severity of the abnormal behaviour. All these issues have been discussed in detail including their practical management.

**Keywords:** Human Behaviour; Workplace; Management.

Behaviour is the range of activities and gestures made by an individual that change its relationship to its environment. It is the response of the individual to various stimuli either from the within or from the external environment or both [1,2]. The nervous system and the endocrine system are believed to be responsible for human behaviour [3].

### Work Behaviour

Work behaviour is the behaviour one exhibits in the place of work or employment and is usually more formal than the behaviour at other places. This generally depends on the job profile and varies from profession to profession. For instance, a photographer would usually have more flexibility in the work behaviour than a doctor. People usually remain more careful about how they behave among their colleagues as many actions made carelessly can

be perceived by others as serious or inappropriate and create displeasure in the work environment [4,5].

### *Counterproductive Work Behaviour*

Counterproductive work behaviour is a type of work behaviour. These are the acts that employees have against the organisations that do harm or violate the work production. Even individuals do not recognise this behaviour and seem normal to them. Few examples of counterproductive behaviour are passive actions such as not working to meet date line or faking incompetence [6].

### *Violence by Colleagues and Superiors:*

Sometimes employees are harassed by colleagues and superiors while working. A variety of abusive behaviours is demonstrated against victims to interrupt their work, get their work done and stay in

<sup>1</sup>Specialist & Head <sup>2</sup>Senior Resident, Department of Psychiatry, ESI Hospital, Rohini, New Delhi, India.

their current employment. The interferences that the perpetrators employ are: stocking, harassment and sabotaging the victim so that they cannot get to work [7].

#### *Boredom*

Jobs that require individuals to do the same task on a daily basis can lead to boredom on the work. It could result in unfavourable work practices such as frequently missing work, lack of concentration or withdrawal from the task that the person was hired to do leading to a decrease in work efficiency [8].

#### *Other Counterproductive Behaviours*

Often people come across various other forms of counterproductive behaviours in their workplace. These are: ignoring people at work, working slowly when the work needs to be done fast, refusing to help their colleagues, refusing to accept a task, showing less interest in their work, showing destructive behaviour against their colleagues and not appreciating their colleague's success [9].

#### *Sexual Harassment in the Workplace*

Sexual harassment occurs when one individual either a male or a female takes a sexual interest in the other person while at work and try to exploit him or her. It could lead to the feeling of insecurities and pressures to leave the organisation. Studies also showed that sexual harassment could lead to people feel depressed, result in high level of anxiety and mental as well as physical stress [10].

#### *Verbal Abuse*

Verbal abuse indicates some form of mistreatment using an oral expression [11]. Verbal abuse includes the following: anger with abusive words, accusing and blaming, countering, judging and criticising, name calling, ordering, threatening, age discrimination, bullying, emotional abuse, hate speech, social rejection and so on.<sup>12</sup> Verbal abuse creates emotional pain and anguish. The person abused verbally for long period may succumb to any stress related illness.

The victims may even develop clinical depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and other forms of anxiety disorders. It can reduce the productivity in the workplace affecting the quality of work, turnovers, and even may lead to the resignation of the employee. Despite being the most common form of abuse, verbal abuse is generally not taken seriously

as there is no visible proof [13].

So naturally, the question arises what is *normal behaviour* then? In general, 'normal' refers to a lack of significant deviation from the average. It not only varies from person-to-person [14] but also depends on time, place, and situation – it may change along with changing societal standards and norms. On the individual level, persons who suffer from psychiatric disorders may present with behavioural abnormalities. In severe cases, people who violate social norms, such as criminals, invite a punishment from others in the society [15,16]. At the same time nobody wants to be labelled as sick or abnormal. Most people want to be normal so that they can relate to society at large [17]. Since being normal is generally considered an ideal, there is often pressure from external sources as well as from people's intrinsic desire to feel included.

Before labelling somebody abnormal *eccentricity should be ruled out*. In contrast to normal behaviour, eccentricity is not the quite common ways which individuals in society follow to solve given problems and pursue certain priorities in everyday life. Eccentricity is often associated with genius, intellectual giftedness or creativity. Eccentric behaviour may be the outward expression of their unique intelligence or creative impulse [18].

### **Management**

#### *Corrective Measures & Lifestyle Issues*

After assessing the relationship between behaviours and health outcomes, studies have established their role in both morbidity and mortality of individuals [19,20]. These studies have indicated towards seven features of lifestyle which were often associated with lower risk for diseases and thereby extending active lifespan [21]. These are avoiding snacks, eating breakfast regularly, exercising on a regular basis, maintaining a desirable body weight, moderate alcohol intake, not smoking, sleeping 7-8 hours per night. The quality of life should be improved by promoting good health and avoiding all types of addictions.

#### *Promoting Positive Mental Health*

At least one counsellor should be there in the workplace or office who will deal with day to day issues where a personalised approach is required. Presentations should be arranged on a regular basis on various topics like time management techniques, how to cope with stress in workplace, yoga and

meditation practices [22]. To promote positive physical and mental health the importance of recreational activities cannot be ignored. There should be space and arrangement for various recreational activities in the office or workplace. Employees should be taught to keep aside some time daily for his/her personal purpose only. All these are required to create a relaxed working environment for the employees [23].

#### *Recognition*

Recognising positive and productive behaviour at the workplace can be done using job analysis. Feedback may be given according to the performance. This method gives others a better understanding and evaluation of a typical duty they are looking for. Rewarding the productive behaviour increases the performance further [24].

#### *Counselling*

Personal conflict leads to disappointment and dissatisfaction in work leading to lowering of effectiveness. Counselling may be definitely helpful in these cases. If organizations cannot afford to appoint counsellors, staff can be trained by professional counsellors to manage and deal with personal issues effectively with a non-directive approach. To perform the role of a counsellor the person should be a good listener who will listen to with the understanding of the problem [25]. Simply being able to communicate one's feelings to a concerned and active listener is enough to relieve mental disturbances and may facilitate a person to go forward towards a problem-solving frame of mind. Ventilation may help upset employees and workers to cope with their problems [26].

Counselling by professional counsellors with expressing sympathy and empathy to the person concerned increases its effectiveness. While sympathy is an expression of understanding and care for someone else's suffering, empathy is the ability to share someone else's feelings or experiences by putting oneself in the shoes of another.

#### *Conflict Resolution*

Conflict resolution at work is important to resolve any issue that arises at work among team members. Conflict resolution or reconciliation is the process and the technique used in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict and grievance. Few group members may attempt to resolve group conflicts by actively communicating information about their conflicting

motives or ideologies to the rest of the group and by engaging in collective negotiation [27]. Handling these issues appropriately helps decrease harmful influences of all types of conflicts by bringing back integrity, building success in the workplace and restoring efficiency. Resolving conflict allows all disagreements to be fixed in a way that is beneficial to two or more individuals or the group [28].

#### *Psychiatric Consultation*

Abnormality in behaviour may occur due to various psychiatric disorders [29]. Whenever it becomes difficult to identify the cause of a particular odd behaviour, psychiatric consultation may be taken. If the psychiatrist diagnoses a disorder and advises any treatment for that, it should be followed appropriately to control the abnormal behaviour pattern.

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