

**GUEST EDITORS' INTRODUCTION TO SPECIAL EDITION**

**RESEARCHING COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE BEHAVIOURS IN THE  
WORKPLACE—INTERNATIONAL APPROACHES AND  
PERSPECTIVES**

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Welcome to our Special Issue of the *International Journal of Organisational Behaviour*, which is entitled 'Researching Counter-Productive Behaviours in the Workplace—International Approaches and Perspectives'. Special thanks to the people who responded to the call for papers in this important area and to the authors featured herein. We very much appreciate the work of our reviewers who gave of their time and expertise in the review process. We would also like to thank Chris O'Reilly for her editorial assistance in the final stages.

Counterproductive workplace behaviours are increasingly recognised as a very important factor in the well-being and productivity of individuals and work teams, ultimately impacting significantly on organisational effectiveness. Importantly, these behaviours can permeate organisational cultures and affect group norms, increasing the likelihood of wider acceptance and enactment of such behaviours. This special issue highlights the importance of understanding the complexities around the development, maintenance, and possible escalation of counterproductive behaviours in the workplace, and the many negative impacts on individuals, relationships, and organisational cultures and sub-cultures. A key feature of the articles presented in this special edition is on understanding the reciprocal nature of relationships affected by counterproductive behaviours within particular contexts. Throughout there is a focus on understanding both theoretical and practical implications, with a focus on

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improving individual, social and economic outcomes for people and their organisations. The papers focus on Australian and international contexts, and cover a wide scope of conceptual and empirical work. Together, these papers illuminate future research imperatives and implications for practice.

The special edition demonstrates the importance of considering counterproductive behaviours from organisational, group and individual viewpoints. All of the papers offer interesting new perspectives and insights about counterproductive work behaviours, their management and future research. The first paper examines definitional issues where **Sara Branch** discusses the importance of gaining further clarity about counterproductive behaviours, and particularly explores the similarities and differences between the concept of workplace bullying and alternative terms like incivility and harassment. She uses findings from an interview study to clarify the definitional issues raised and proposes a model that could form part of a comprehensive antisocial behaviour policy within organisations.

Focusing on a Norwegian health organisation, **Brita Bjørkelo, Wenche Ryberg, Stig Berge Matthiesen and Ståle Einarsen** present a case study where an employee blew the whistle internally on unethical coercive treatment of patients. He then blew the whistle externally when the wrongdoing was not stopped. Despite retaliation and exposure to workplace bullying, the whistle blower perceived the most damaging factor was not being believed in court and not being listened to. The results of this case study have implications for organisations, employees, employers and supporters of whistle blowers.

**Keith Townsend and Paula McDonald** present a case study of a greenfield site organisation in Australia. Primarily, data was collected via the ethnographic participant-observation method over an eight month period, allowing the authors to discuss the multi-faceted relationships. The paper outlines how commitment decreased and counter-productive behaviours increased in certain circumstances. Complexities around counterproductive behaviours and the implications for managers and employees are discussed.

Looking at an Australian public sector context, **Linda Shallcross, Michael Sheehan and Sheryl Ramsay** discuss the counterproductive behaviour of ‘workplace mobbing’ where gossip, rumour, innuendo, and malicious accusations are reported to target unfairly and discredit certain workers. This paper is based on an in-depth interview study with 12 self-identified targets of workplace mobbing. It reports on their experiences, which included conclusion of their employment and reflects important themes such as workplace culture and the nature of work in the public sector, which may be associated with mobbing.

In considering important issues around shame and pride, **Valerie Braithwaite, Eliza Ahmed, and John Braithwaite** consider the prediction of bullying and victimization in the workplace. Survey data was obtained from 824 full-time employees in workplaces in the large metropolis of Dhaka, Bangladesh. Interestingly, the authors found that shame and pride management are significant predictors of bullying behaviour wherein those who bully others appear to have poor shame management skills and their pride management skills display a willingness to dominate others.

Within a Spanish sample, **Bernardo Moreno-Jiménez, Alfredo Rodríguez Muñoz, Denise Salin and Mario Eugenia Morante Benadero** investigate the prevalence and forms of bullying and identify particular risk groups for the types of counterproductive work

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behaviours most often associated with bullying. Their study indicates that Spain has a relatively high prevalence of bullying in comparison to other countries, also noting that females are more likely to be bullied than males. Their findings emphasise the importance of gender, work experience, type of contract and educational level in the bullying process.

With recent research indicating that people from ethnic minority groups are particularly vulnerable to workplace bullying, **Sheryl Ramsay, Michelle Barker and Linda Shallcross** focus on the circumstances of skilled migrants in Australia. Theoretical frameworks are used to examine the problem and results of a pilot study based on a work preparation program for unemployed skilled migrants are presented. The vulnerability of skilled migrants to counterproductive behaviours is discussed, along with recommendations for future research.

Taking more of an individual perspective, albeit with very wide organisational implications, **Alison Ruth** explores processes in electronic communication, specifically email, and the ways in which technology can contribute to counterproductive workplace behaviours leading to, and including, bullying. She elaborates three levels of behaviour that point to the potential for email to be used as a mode of bullying and provides strategies for reducing these potentials within organisations.

The special edition concludes with a paper that draws together organisational, team and job related risk factors. **Elfi Baillien, Inge Neyens and Hans de Witte's** paper reports on qualitative research into the realm of risk factors of negative acts at work, bullying, violence and sexual harassment based on the experiences of victims. In their European sample, 126 semi-structured, in-depth interviews were performed with organizational insiders with experience of negative acts at work. Interestingly, possible risk factors were found at the levels of job, team and organisation, and theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

In overview, this special issue considers a wide range of current, important theoretical and practical concerns in Australian and international contexts. It is hoped that through greater understanding of the complexities of counterproductive workplace behaviours, further practical steps can be taken to address the impacts that are presently occurring, and to ultimately reduce the potential for the development and maintenance of such behaviours.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The guest editors acknowledge gratefully the articles written by the contributing authors and the local and international reviewers who agreed to review the articles. These referees have significantly enhanced the quality of the articles published in this special edition.