



The Relationship between the Dark Triad, Anomia, Negative Affectivity and Counterproductive Work Behaviours (CWBs): Moderating Effect of External Locus of Control

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Abstract

The study focuses on investigating individual differences that make people to engage in CWBs. To better understand how CWBs and individual differences are related to one another, Locus of Control (LoC) was also investigated to ascertain its impacts on the already-existing link between individual differences and work-related behaviours. The study's independent variables include the Dark Triad—Machiavellianism, Narcissism, and Psychopathy—as well as Anomia and Negative Affectivity. As the moderating variable, Locus of Control, which is specifically concentrated on External (LoC-E) was used. Lastly, the dependent variable is CWBs, which compose of Types S, O, and D misbehaviours. A total of 588 respondents were included in the stratified quota sample technique, and their replies were gathered through online surveys. It was discovered that LoC-E moderates the relationships between Psychopathy also Anomia with type D CWB. The results of this study would assist other academics in conducting research in this area using more variables to better understand Counterproductive Work Behaviours (CWBs). It is recommended that more research should be conducted to examine the impact of other job elements such reward systems using larger samples. Moreover, a longitudinal study is also suggested to cater for the events that occur throughout the year such as job rotation, and performance appraisal.

Keywords: The Dark Triad, Anomia, Negative Affectivity, Counterproductive Work Behaviours, External Locus of Control.

1. Introduction

In Malaysia, the issue of integrity among civil servants is regularly debated, highlighting not only the breach of trust and abuse of power but also embezzlement and corruption. According to Muzaffar Syah (2016), all public officers are still impacted by the consequences even if only a small number of civil servants are said to have participated in unethical behaviours. Nonetheless, the majority of civil servants still uphold their integrity by performing each job

to the best of their ability, ensuring that only the best services are provided to everyone, inclusively (Article Integrity Management and Conduct of Civil Servants, 2019).

The government has implemented many measures to strengthen the regulations controlling the district administration's capabilities in the public sector, including employee behaviour and service performance (Fei et al., 2019); however, as contended by Wu (2002) in their study involving policymakers, self-interest may interfere with people's ethics and consequently influence unethical behaviours. Therefore, Counterproductive Work Behaviours (CWBs) are one of the issues that Malaysian policymakers are concerned about.

Even though the issue of unethical behaviour among employees is brought up in the media every now and then, Malaysia still lacks empirical data on the factors that contribute to this issue because research on workplace deviant behaviour has mostly been done in the West. As stated by Mazni et al. (2013), including in the Asian context, very little empirical research on CWBs has been undertaken in Malaysia. Nevertheless, Baker (2015) stated that CWBs do come with certain predictors such as employee personality traits, internal determinants, and the internal control that occurs in organisations (Marcus and Schuler, 2004). Organisational research has also delved into certain factors on how employees perceive their workplace, such as in terms of absenteeism, errors, turnover, morale, and CWBs so that the well-being of employees is prioritised and everyone is treated as significant assets (Michie and West, 2004).

Locus of Control (LoC), according to Mac Neill (1998), plays a key role in influencing human behaviour. LoC is also referred to as individual control, which focuses on individual attributions in terms of whether people govern themselves internally or externally. In general, the idea of LoC refers to a belief in personal control that affects behaviour in a range of situations. For instance, Hahn (2000) stated that a person may see control differently depending on the situation in their personal and professional interactions. Therefore, it has become necessary to include LoC as a moderator in research, especially one that focuses on the ethical intention of individuals. Volkan, Umit, Emin, and Faith (2013), for example, suggested that the ethical behaviour of individuals may be moderated by LoC. Similarly, Fox and Spector (1999) also found that LoC moderated the association between frustration and CWBs. In this vein, the current study aims to support the moderating role of internal LoC on the relationships between individual personalities, specifically the Dark Triad (i.e., Machiavellianism, Narcissism, and Psychopathy), Anomia, and Negative Affectivity with Counterproductive Work Behaviours (CWBs) (i.e., Type S, Type O, and Type D misbehaviours).

Locus of Control (LoC) has been a key topic in personality and behaviour research. The idea of LoC, which is related to how individuals see their responsibilities in causing a life event, also reflects the common ideas about whether individuals may influence their own life events. Particularly, those with higher internal LoC tend to attribute each event's outcome to their self-controlled actions. Moreover, these individuals also think that if such an event occurs in their lives, then it will be due directly to their own achievements owing to their own efforts.

Therefore, Chiang et al. (2019) asserted that these individuals are more likely to credit or blame themselves for a situation and then link an outcome to their self-controlled behaviours.

2. Literature Review

According to Spain et al. (2014), the three negative personality qualities that make up the "Dark Triad" include subclinical Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and Psychopathy. Narcissism entails one's unrestrained aspirations of greatness and exaggerated impressions of oneself, which lead to a highly uncontrolled desire to become a narcissist (Furnham et al., 2013). Following this is Machiavellianism, which is associated with the idea that individuals can be fooled and duped easily due to their gullibility (Christie and Geis, 1970). Finally, the last negative personality quality, i.e., psychopathy, is frequently linked to a propensity for antisocial behaviour and open mockery of societal norms (Scherer et al., 2013).

Highly narcissistic individuals, according to DeShong et al. (2015), commonly commit theft, aggression, and non-violent crime. In this regard, narcissists consequently have more sensitivity towards negative events because they tend to view themselves as victims and believe that others are acting maliciously. Therefore, in addition to acting out their anger, they are also likely to behave in an unproductive or disruptive manner at work or in a confrontational manner to others (Wu and Lebreton, 2011). In contrast, Machiavellianism has been associated with severe cases of immorality and unethical behaviours. Apart from being frequently hostile, Machiavellians may also treat others poorly or lie to further their agendas (Mahmood et al., 2021), as well as engage in counterproductive work behaviours such as sabotaging, abusing, and stealing from others (Giacalone and Knouse, 2001). Finally, Psychopathy was characterised by Schilbach et al. (2020) as counterproductive work behaviours that manifest in the form of dysfunctional cognitive-affective propensities. Due to their low levels of affectivity, psychopaths may neither care about others nor be devoted to their careers, and they also tend to not be responsible for their behaviours since they believe that they are exempt from following the rules and regulations (Boddy, 2006; O'Boyle et al., 2012). As a result, individuals with a high degree of psychopathy frequently exhibit counterproductive work behaviours because they can neither assess their surroundings nor the consequences properly.

Negative affectivity, as opposed to Positive Affectivity, is more crucial for controlling Counterproductive Work Behaviours (CWBs) (Spector and Fox, 2005; Martinko et al., 2002). When Negative Affectivity is present, certain feelings with a similar effect such as freezing and numbing are evoked, instead of energising and moving. Nervous individuals frequently feel weak and may overlook self-reliance or refrain from taking a position. These individuals are also inclined to inactivity due to excessive information, being worried about not comprehending what is important, and fear of poor decision-making, all of which are deemed overwhelming to them. Hence, Negative Affectivity will decrease the volume and consistency of knowledge consulted while making decisions. This propensity, according to Fuqua et al. (1988) and Lounsbury et al. (2004), has been observed in a variety of circumstances, including informed health decisions and potential careers. Based on Julien's (1999) study on job knowledge among teenagers, several students avoided looking for career-

related information and occasionally tried to stop searching so as not to feel extensively worried and confused.

Besides, college students' indecision has been reported to be influenced by not only Negative Affectivity but also social anxiety, mental volatility, fear of commitment, and restlessness (Chartrand et al., 1994; Leong and Chervinko, 1996; Lounsbury et al., 2004; Kracke and Schmitt-Rodermund, 2001). Individuals that struggle with making decisions often exhibit nervousness, external factors, low self-esteem, and inadequate identity formation (Hartman, 1990; Hartman and Fuqua, 1983; Salomone, 1982). Additionally, Chartrand et al. (1994) stated that such a state lowers personal efficacy and one's knowledge of careers.

All CWBs, according to Fox et al. (2001), are founded on the idea that negative behaviours are detrimental to not only the organisation's resources but also its environment and employees, which will then affect its overall functions or how each member performs. Accordingly, this illustrates the organisational members who engage in such activities (Sacket, 2002), which may be intentional or unintentional, and which are motivated by varying objectives and causes. According to Marcus and Schuler (2004), there are three conditions that must be met for an action to be deemed a counterproductive work behaviour: (i) it is deliberate, regardless of the reason for causing harm during the action; (ii) the individual is unaware of any potential risks prior to performing the action; and (iii) the action goes against the organisation's legitimate interests. In line with Vardi and Weiner (2004), the three CWB categories emphasised in the current study are Type S, Type O, and Type D misbehaviours.

Type S

Type S misbehaviour is frequently impacted by the instrumental assessment of the extent to which engaging in the behaviour is beneficial to the one who is engaged in it, as well as its prospective benefits and drawbacks (Vardi and Weitz, 2004). In addition, Type S misbehaviour is often driven by basic demands, such as the need for a certain profession with a high degree of autonomy and remote work, as well as other factors such as boredom, greed, stress, and narcissism. Such improper behaviours are a mirror of how overly autonomous employees may behave. Based on the above discussion, these employees may not only steal time and put off completing tasks or pursue personal interests, but they may also misuse or waste organisational resources while no one is monitoring or looking.

Type O

According to Vardi and Weiner (2004), Type O misbehaviour is frequently targeted at not only customers and competitors but also other government-run organisations. Employee goals often serve as a defining characteristic of Type O misbehaviour since it is primarily focused on supporting organisations instead of serving oneself. As outlined by Vardi and Weitz (2004), workaholism, corporate espionage, groupthink, and whistleblowing are several instances of Type O misbehaviour. For example, if a first-line supervisor who has served the same organisation for more than two decades knowingly modifies safety records and conceals safety violations or alerts staff to impending inspections to hide issues from the inspectors, then Type O misbehaviour has taken place.

Type D

Type D misbehaviour, which can be internal or external, denotes the behaviour of targeting injury. While Type S and Type O misbehaviours mainly aim to benefit individuals or organisations, Type D misbehaviour may, on the other hand, do the opposite. Type D offenders may engage in intentional wrongdoing, such as damaging the property of organisations, regardless of whether they are acting on their own motive or doing it for their family members or close friends. This harm can be little and/or substantial, and it can also be covert or obvious. Furthermore, low autonomy, unjust treatment, jealousy, certain job types such as remote work, psychological contract breaches, social undermining, and stress are among the factors influencing Type D misbehaviour (Vardi & Weitz, 2004), which further lead to undesirable behaviours such as obsessivity, hostility, alcohol misuse at work, violence driven by individuals or organisations, espionage, disclosure of information to demonstrate revenge, and sabotage in the workplace to send a message or exact retribution.

Locus of Control (LoC) refers to the extent to which an individual feels they have the power to directly influence the environment such that it has a significant impact on their perceptions and reactions to the environment (Mac Neill, 1998). Owing to the substantial contribution of LoC to the study of human behaviour, LoC has indeed been a widely known concept. According to Aditya et al. (2018), apart from internal LoC, another category of LoC includes external LoC, which illustrates one's achievement by luck as well as one's faith in instinctual behaviour prior to an action. As such, those with an external LoC are likely motivated by monetary worth and frequently need assistance during action (Woodward, 1982), apart from reacting counterproductively to their discontent with the organisation.

When handling individuals with a high degree of external LoC, Perlow and Latham (1993) also included the abusive feature towards clients. People turn to destructive behaviours due to their propensity for manipulating their settings to suit them. For instance, Spector and Fox (1999) demonstrated that those with a high degree of LoC tend to experience not only job dissatisfaction but also workplace frustration. Additionally, these individuals may have higher levels of sensitivity, especially when it comes to getting help from the organisation since they think that the organisation plays a crucial role in deciding their success (Aube et al., 2007).

3. Methodology

Drawing from the data from Selangor local councils' annual reports, 588 participants of Grade 1 (grades 19 to 28), Grade 2 (grades 29 to 40), and Grade 3 (grades 41 to 54) took part in a cross-sectional survey that was conducted in Selangor municipal councils. Using proportional stratified quota sampling in which every population member has an equal chance of being chosen, data were gathered from the respondents of the study. According to Sedgwick (2012), in surveys and opinion polls where the whole population being surveyed is predetermined, proportional stratified quota sampling is frequently employed for this purpose. In the current study, the sample size constitutes 6 per cent of the total employees in each municipal council, and a sample size of 500 respondents is considered adequate (Salkind, 2012). The total number of respondents was determined by multiplying the total

number of Selangor municipal council employees by 100 and dividing it by the total number of respondents. The same formula was then used to determine the sample for each local council.

To measure all the variables in this study, 39 items were used for different sections. First, Section A highlights the respondents' demographics. This is followed by Section B, which measures the Dark Triad, Anomia, and Negative Affectivity. Specifically, these variables were measured using a 5-point Likert scale from 1 with "Strongly Disagree" to 5 with "Strongly Agree" for both the Dark Triad and Anomia, as well as from 1 with "Not at All" to 5 with "Extremely" for Negative Affectivity. Finally, Section C also measures Counterproductive Work Behaviours (CWBs) using a 5-point scale from 1 with "Never" to 5 with "Always." Data were collected within six months from January 2022 to June 2022.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Moderating Effects of External Locus of Control (LoC-E) on Type S Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB)

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Independent Variable			
DT – Machiavellianism	.256	.283	.233
DT – Narcissism	-.237	-.113	.005
DT – Psychopathy	.160	.155	-.017
Negative Affectivity	.126	.122	-.060
Anomia	.145	.142	.143
Moderating Variable			
Locus of Control – External (LoC-E)		.206	.026
Interaction Term			
DT – Machiavellianism*LoC-E			.050 (.815)
DT – Narcissism*LoC-E			-.094 (.472)
DT – Psychopathy*LoC-E			.195 (.296)
Negative Affectivity*LoC-E			.196 (.271)
Anomia*LoC-E			.019 (.929)
R-Squared	.229	.253	.259
R-Squared Change	.229	.025	.006
F Change	34.480	19.241	.857
Sig. of F Change	.000	.000	.510
F	34.480	32.841	18.281
df	582	581	576
Sig.	.000	.000	.000
Durbin-Watson			1.953

Table 1 illustrates the results for the moderating effect of External Locus of Control (LoC-E) on the relationships between Machiavellianism, Narcissism, Psychopathy, Negative Affectivity, and Anomia with Type S Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB) (e.g. misuse organisational resources). The results revealed that no moderating effect of LoC-E was found on the relationships between the above-mentioned variables. As noted in Model 1 ($F(5, 582) = 34.480; p < .05$), 22.9% of the variance is explained in Type S CWB and an increment to 25.3% in Model 2 ($F(6, 581) = 32.841; p < .05$) was observed. Meanwhile, in Model 3, 25.9% of variance explained in Type S CWB was recorded, which increased from Model 2 ($F(11, 576) = 18.281; p > .05$). However, the results showed no significant moderating effect of LoC-E on the relationships between the independent variables and Type S CWB. Thus, no graphical illustration is needed due to the non-significant values in the interaction terms.

Table 2. Moderating Effects of External Locus of Control (LoC-E) on Type O Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB)

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Independent Variable			
DT – Machiavellianism	.133	.157	.266
DT – Narcissism	.004	.113	-.302
DT – Psychopathy	-.028	-.032	.250
Negative Affectivity	.054	.050	-.039
Anomia	.094	.092	.075
Moderating Variable			
Locus of Control – External (LoC-E)		.181	.104
Interaction Term			
DT – Machiavellianism*LoC-E			-.118 (-.491)
DT – Narcissism*LoC-E			.333 (.023)
DT – Psychopathy*LoC-E			-.303 (.147)
Negative Affectivity*LoC-E			.104 (.601)
Anomia*LoC-E			-.016 (.945)
R-Squared	.042	.061	.074
R-Squared Change	.042	.019	.013
F Change	5.146	11.813	1.594
Sig. of F Change	.000	.001	.160
F	5.146	6.337	4.199
df	582	581	576
Sig.	.000	.000	.000
Durbin-Watson			1.715

Table 2 depicts the results for the moderating effect of External Locus of Control (LoC-E) on the relationships of Machiavellianism, Narcissism, Psychopathy, Negative Affectivity, and Anomia with Type O Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB) (e.g. workaholics). The results showed no moderating effect of LoC-E on the relationship between variables. As noted in Model 1 ($F(5, 582) = 5.146; p < .05$), 4.2% of variance explained in Type O CWB was recorded, which increased to 6.1% in Model 2 ($F(6, 581) = 6.337; p < .05$). In Model 3, 7.4% of variance explained in Type O CWB was recorded, which increased from Model 2 ($F(11, 576) = 4.199; p > .05$). However, the statistics showed no significant moderating effect of LoC-E on the relationships between the independent variables and Type S CWB. Therefore, no graphical illustration is needed to illustrate the interaction terms of the variables.

Table 3. Moderating Effects of External Locus of Control (LoC-E) on Type D Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB)

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Independent Variable			
DT – Machiavellianism	.208	.186	-.002
DT – Narcissism	.145	.039	-.080
DT – Psychopathy	-.041	-.038	-.515
Negative Affectivity	.134	.137	.094
Anomia	-.031	-.029	.791
Moderating Variable			
Locus of Control – External (LoC-E)		-.174	-.065
Interaction Term			
DT – Machiavellianism*LoC-E			.207 (.368)
DT – Narcissism*LoC-E			.123 (.379)
DT – Psychopathy*LoC-E			.499 (.013)
Negative Affectivity*LoC-E			.029 (.878)
Anomia*LoC-E			-.909 (.000)
R-Squared	.106	.123	.151
R-Squared Change	.106	.018	.028
F Change	13.737	11.724	3.799
Sig. of F Change	.000	.001	.002
F	13.737	13.613	9.331
df	582	581	576
Sig.	.000	.000	.000
Durbin-Watson			2.069

Table 3 tabulates the results for the moderating effect of External Locus of Control (LoC-E) on the relationships between Machiavellianism, Narcissism, Psychopathy, Negative Affectivity, and Anomia with Type D Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB) (e.g. retaliatory whistleblowing). The results showed 10.6% of variance explained in Type D CWB ($F(5, 582) = 13.737, p < .05$). In Model 2, an 1.8% additional variance contributed to 12.3% in total ($F(6, 581) = 13.613; p < .05$) and the R-squared value in Model 3 is 15.1% ($F(11, 576) = 9.331, p < .05$) with an increment of 1.8% from Model 2. Overall, the additional R-squared values for all three models suggest the moderating effect of LoC-E on the relationship between the independent variables and Type D CWB. In addition, the graphical illustrations in Figure 4.9 and Figure 4.10 also show the establishment of the moderating effects of External Locus of Control (LoC-E) on the relationship between Psychopathy and Type D Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB) and between Anomia with Type D Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB).

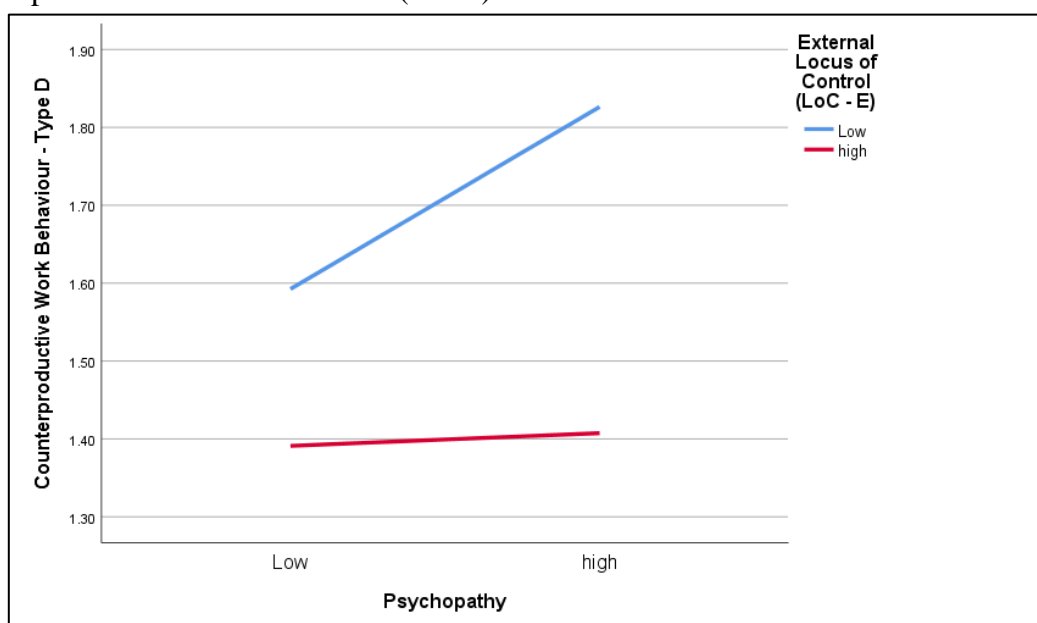


Figure 1: Moderating Effect of External Locus of Control (LoC-E) on the Relationship between Psychopathy and Type D CWBs

The moderating role that the External Locus of Control (LoC-E) plays in the association between Psychopathy and Type D CWB (e.g. sabotage of equipment due to feeling of injustice) is shown in Figure 1. Both high and low LoC-E are presented in the graph as the two distinct lines, low External Locus of Control (blue line) and high External Locus of Control (red line). Employees with low LoC-E, have moderate score on Type D CWB when they have low level of Psychopathy. However, their score on Type D CWB increases drastically when they have high level of Psychopathy. In contrast, employees with high LoC-E score low on Type D CWB although they have either low or high level of Psychopathy. This is an interesting finding regarding the employees with low External Locus of Control. It shows that these group of employees act impulsively and aggressively in social and organisational settings (Type D CWB) to exhibit disagreement or dissatisfaction with events which affect them.

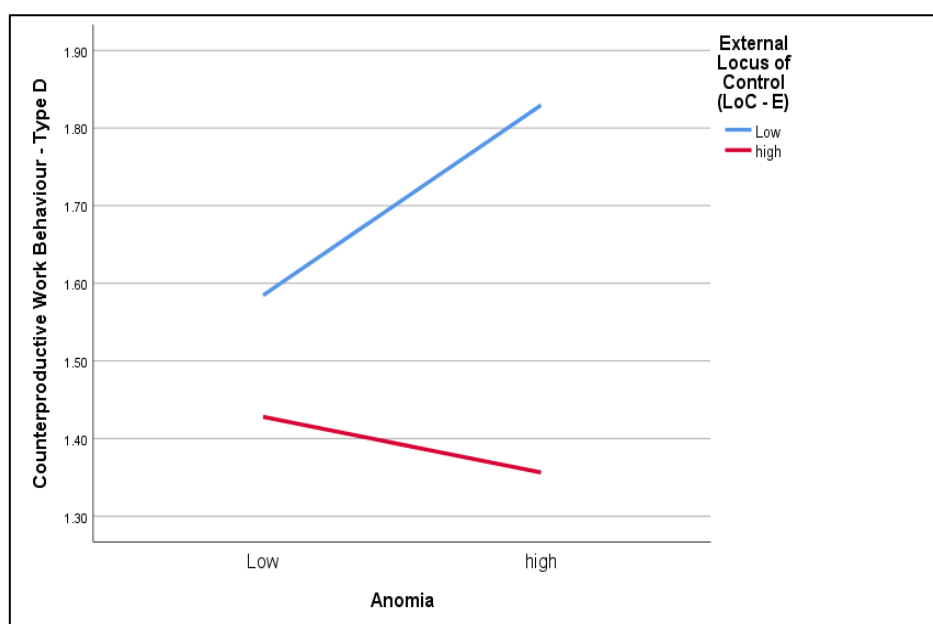


Figure 2: Moderating Effect of External Locus of Control (LoC-E) on the Relationship between Anomia and Type D CWBs

Figure 2 demonstrates the connection between Anomia and Type D Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB) (e.g. invited speakers for events) is moderated by External Locus of Control (LoC-E). Both high and low LoC-E are depicted in the graph as two distinct lines, blue line indicates low LoC-E and red line indicates high LoC-E. Employees with low LoC-E, score moderately on Type D CWB when they have low level of Anomia. At the high level of Anomia, their score on Type D CWB is also getting higher. In contrast, the graph also shows that employees with high LoC-E exhibit lower score on Type D CWB as compared to those with low LoC-E. However, when they have high feeling of Anomia, there is a decrease in the score on Type D CWB. This finding is a remarkable finding on employee's behaviours when they are given certain amounts of authority. It is believed that employees with low LoC-E tend to have high score on CWB Type D as they are not a part of the process (e.g., feeling isolated) to contribute to the outcomes, therefore they tend to act at their will as they are not the one who will suffer from the consequences of their actions. Meanwhile, employees with high External Locus of Control must act wisely as they are known as the regulator to situations and being evaluated for the outcome produced especially for those with high Anomia.

5. Conclusion

According to Naswall et al. (2005), External Locus of Control (LoC-E) has also been linked to deteriorated well-being and job satisfaction, as well as an increase in helplessness. In addition, people with LoC-E claim to have no influence over events such as their own success or failure (Landstrom et al., 2008). Relatively low levels of anxiety, which are associated with Psychopathy, have also been suggested to serve as a key component of tolerance (Cleckley, 1976). Additionally, studies have suggested that Psychopathic qualities may protect people from the damaging consequences of persistent stress on mental health (Anestis et al., 2017; Sandvik et al., 2015).

Similar findings were evidenced by Perlow and Latham (1993) in which those with higher LoC-E levels are more likely to act abusively against clients at work. Additionally, individuals with external Locus of Control (LoC-E) may experience a tendency to change their surroundings to exert and achieve more control. As a result, they tend to engage in harmful behaviours (Ng et al., 2006). To demonstrate this, Fox and Spector (1999), for instance, discovered that those with external Locus of Control (LoC-E) and a high trait anxiety level tend to report higher degrees of irritation and job dissatisfaction. In addition, as they believe that organisations have a big impact on their achievement, employees with external Locus of Control (LoC-E) are more receptive to receiving organisational support (Aube et al., 2007).

Furthermore, in response to workplace pressures, employees with higher LoC-E may also exhibit a greater propensity to engage in CWBs, according to Storms and Spector (1987). In other words, as LoC-E rises, employees deem external occurrences more dangerous than internal ones, and they also assign blame for the elements beyond their control to their companies or other employees (Balazadeh and Hansson, 2021). In this regard, employees may experience a greater sense of control over the events when they are displaying CWBs (Allen and Greenberger, 1980).

In line with this study, the respondents acted defiantly in their work processes not only for their benefits but also for their organisations even though they believed that the outcome of their actions might not turn out as expected. Invisible employees, who are unnoticed in their presence, might take advantage of the particular condition as they tend to believe that their presence does not have any importance and their actions are not affecting anything. Therefore, they will act accordingly as they desire not only for their own benefits but also for their organisations. This is supported by Perlow and Latham (1993) who revealed that employees with low LoC-E will entertain customers as they wish and take an initiative to change their environment in order to have more control. Thus, to gain something for themselves, they will adjust the environment to work as planned, resulting in the desired outcomes. Although they have no control over the outcomes, they can still adjust the environment to work accordingly as planned.

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