Organizational Backstabbing Techniques

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Abstract

Destructive behaviors directed by one employee against another are common occurrences in the workplace. One type of these anti-citizenship behaviors is Organizational Backstabbing. We've probably been backstabbed at our workplaces many times, and sometimes we may have backstabbed others. These behaviors can have adverse consequences on the career path of employees and organizational results. The study can help managers make better decisions, in the face of these behaviors. This research is an interpretive study and the data are collected using the interview method and analyzed based on Grounded Theory (GT). The data were coded by WEBQDA software, and we identified thirty initial codes. The results suggest eight categories of Organizational Backstabbing Techniques. The eight techniques of Organizational Backstabbing are Simple destruction, combined destruction, Two-way destruction, Bad defense, Performance barrier, Trapping, Press on the hot spot, and Machine gun. This study will help to evaluate these types of behaviors by an in-depth review of Organizational Backstabbing literature.

Disciplinary: Management Sciences (HRM).

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1 Introduction

Many studies have focused on anti-citizenship organizational behaviors that focus primarily on aggressive physical acts against individuals or corporate sabotage (Kaukiainen, et al., 2001). However, a few studies have been conducted on the subtle forms of anti-citizenship behavior in the workplace that are covert but can harm employees and organizations (e.g., gossip Making, undermining, blaming, lying, etc). These hidden behaviors between employees are more prevalent than the physical type of behaviors at an organization (Neuman & Baron, 1998). This type of latent aggression is commonly referred to as "Organizational backstabbing" (Malone & Hayes, 2012).

Limited studies conducted in the field of Organizational backstabbing, have focused on the definition of Organizational backstabbing and in some others, the causes of Organizational backstabbing behaviors have been evaluated and reviewed. For example, McFarland explains why is Organizational backstabbing done? Brenner & Molander (1977) and many others have provided definitions of Organizational backstabbing and Malone & Hayes and others have researched the motives for DOIng Organizational backstabbing. But none of this research mentions the methods and techniques of Organizational backstabbing. For this reason, in this research, Organizational backstabbing Techniques are studied, and finally, the Techniques that backstabbers use for destruction others are identified. By knowing backstabbing techniques, managers can more accurately evaluate the information they receive to prevent good employee destruction by the backstabber, also the employees of organizations can adopt appropriate strategies to deal with these destructive behaviors to prevent damage to their career path.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Anti-citizenship Behavior or Anti-social Behavior

Harmful and destructive behaviors directed by one employee against other employees are commonplace in the workplace today (Aquino & Douglas, 2003). Mackenzie & Podsakoff have defined "anti-social behavior" as behavior that harms the organization, its employees, and its stakeholders. Extortion, bribery, discrimination, espionage, extortion, fraud, bribery, lying, sabotage, theft, invasion of privacy, and violence are all types of anti-social behaviors (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 1998). Jelinek & Ahearne called these kinds of behaviors as anti-citizenship behavior (ACB). They categorized the behaviors into the following five groups:

Defiance refers to employee behavior that is directly contrary to the organization's orders or policies. For example, an explicit denial of the rules and procedures, refusal to share information related to the organization, and opposition.

Resistance is not generally aggressive. However, as opposing forces are very real, although they are often done in secret, for example, public alignment with the organization and private non-compliance, efforts to hold up teams, Sales work, and bypassing managers.

Work avoidance can be defined as any behavior that is used to delay or forget work or commitments and responsibilities, it may include taking a vacation, working from home, not returning emails and phone calls, not reporting meetings, not being available when calling colleagues.

Aggression is a feeling of physical or emotional energy. It can include violent behavior. For example, it includes control of the team, confrontation, Being arrogant, assuming a short and unpleasant tone with colleagues, and physically threatening colleagues.

Revenge is any behavior that is done to undo some perceived mistakes or injuries. For example, it includes spending non-commercial expenses, broadcasting news of the organization's mistakes, stealing materials (Jelinek & Ahearne, 2006).

2.2 Backstabbing

When the director does not own the business, personal power gains through political means, and competition for resources and promotion begins. At higher levels, the number of competitors is low, but the intensity of competition is high. This process may create the most capable leadership, but the most capable leader is not necessarily the best person to manage the organization. (McFarland, 1966).

In these types of organizations, competitors may steal other people's ideas, cast doubt on others' abilities, or stab someone. (Brenner & Molander, 1977). Backstabbing is a term used to describe tactics to discredit and obliterate competitors. (Lincoln et al., 1982).

In other definition, Backstabbing is defined by a dictionary as an intention to discredit hidden ways such as accusation, innuendo, and similar ways. This is a prevalent issue in various kinds of organizations, including businesses, governments, universities, etc. Managers and directors, in particular, seem to complain about it a lot (Harvey, 1989). Although dictionaries define backstabbing, and the etymology of the word is clear, and most people are discussing the impact of backstabbing but we have not much literature about backstabbing (Harvey, 1989).

This will be even more important when we know that the results of a survey show that eight out of eleven managers believed: To progress, they will occasionally have to use "dirty tactics". For example, taking credit for work done by others, insinuating that some employees did not do their responsibilities, to upgrade, all values must be set aside, and to climb the ladder must aggressively pass over everyone who stands in the way. (Lincoln et al., 1982).

Malone & Hayes have identified the ten motives of organizational backstabber: 1-Self-Advancement: They want to advance career or finances, 2-Power Struggle: They want to gain control of others, 3-Character Flaw: They want to hide weaknesses, 4-Impression Management: They want to look good, 5-Threatened: They feel insecure, 6-Jealousy: They are jealous of something, 7-Wanted Revenge: They want to revenge on someone, 8-Exploited: Others have Misused them, 9-Prejudiced: They prejudice due to race, gender, and age, 10-Work Avoidance: They want to avoid DOIng work (Malone & Hayes, 2012).

People often start backstabbing when hearing gossip or get a message, about the imagined attack. It can encourage their Potential of destructiveness. Backstabbing is not an individual action. It is an action that involves the complicity of a large variety of Actors, Witnesses, Messengers, and Sacrifices. According to these cases, it is an antisocial behavior (Harvey, 1989).

3 Methodology

This research is an interpretive study on Organizational Backstabbing that uses the survey method to gather data and analyze and draw conclusions using inductive approaches based on Grounded theory. Grounded theory is a methodology that is used for qualitative research. Grounded theory constructs hypotheses and theories through the collecting and analysis of data and is based on inductive reasoning (Martin & Turner, 1986). Studies based on grounded theory begin with a question, or collection of qualitative data, when researchers review the data, ideas will

be apparent to the researchers. The researchers tag the ideas with codes and summarize them. In the next step, more data are collected and reviewed, codes are grouped into higher-level, and categorized (Allan, 2003). Birks &Mills consider the Grand Theory in ten stages, including Initial coding, Data collection and analysis, Writing Memo, Theoretical sampling, Theoretical sensitivity, Constant comparative analysis, Intermediate coding, Identifying a Core category, Advanced coding and Theoretical Integration, Generation of Grounded theory (Ralph et al., 2015). The method of collecting supplementary data in this study was using the interview method. According to Cochran's formula, when the population size is unknown with a 95 % confidence level, at least 384 samples are required. In this study, 414 employees from nineteen companies operating in Iran were involved in our interviews. The data for this study were collected between March 2019 and February 2020. The sentences said in the interviews were carefully examined then initial coding was done. More interviews and data collection were done and after analyzing and writing the Memo, the keywords were identified for Theoretical sampling and comparative analysis. The comments received were categorized based on the keywords and intermediate coding generated by WEBQDA Software. We determined the definitions of every code for forming the intermediate codes then we developed advanced coding with WEBQDA Software. Codes that were close to each other were combined and considered as a group and theoretical integration was done. Each group was named with a phrase that includes all related definitions then we developed a map codes graph with WEBQDA Software. Finally, the Theory of Organizational Backstabbing Techniques was determined.

4 Results of the Study

As mentioned, after collecting the data and reviewing the initial coding and categorization, and writing memos, we prepared the Intermediate codes.

4.1 Initial Coding (Open Coding), Categorization, Data Collection, and Analysis

At this stage, by reviewing the collected data line by line, important sentences were identified, for example: "The CEO of the group was sensitive"; "It was his responsibility"; "He reported the results of the meeting differently"; "She was friends with the CEO" are examples of these sentences. The identified sentences showed us how people destroyed others in organizations. By omitting similar cases, the results were summarized in Table 1 where Organizational Backstabbing Techniques, sub-techniques, and examples of each sub-technique are listed.

Table 1: Organizational Backstabbing Techniques (OBT), sub-techniques, and examples.

OBT	Sub-techniques	Examples
Simple destruction	Unrealistic objection	"I always do all the financial work and the supervisor does not control it, but he told the manager that he found a lot of problems when he was controlling the results."
	Unrealistic changes in statistics	"The backstabber is the customer relationship unit head. She changed the customer complaints and showed the results against me."
	Show ineffective	"To get the authority to buy parts directly, he always says that we did not have the parts and we cannot accept cars that come for repairing."

OBT	Sub-techniques	Examples
	Exaggeration in issues	In a private meeting with the CEO, she exaggerated the number of cigarettes I smoke at work.
	Falsely reported	She falsely reported the amount of my leave.
	Unrealistic destruction, about organizational values / Ideological rule.	Director decided to fire someone between me and someone else. My performance is better. He gave an untrue report to an ideological unit about how I dressed and, by lying, accused me of having an unprofessional relationship with the manager.
	Express unrealistic weakness	After my promotion, everyone was satisfied with my management, the backstabber went to the manager and said: the reason for the employees' satisfaction is that she has formed a gang in the organization.
	The dissatisfaction of employees/invitation to disobey	She secretly spoke of the dissatisfaction of my staff in an enlarged manner and tried to downplay the unit's performance.
Combined destruction	Combine reality with lies	"The backstabber had reported the results of the meeting differently when the manager was absent in the meeting."
	Showing reality in a different way	"Another employee had repaired some spare parts poorly. The supervisor showed these parts to the manager and said that I was not skilled."
	False help request for expressing a false subject	My employee was in contact with the senior manager. she said sadly to the manager: "I'm not satisfied, I have nothing to do because my manager has not referred anything to me". But she had not done the routine work.
Two-way destruction	Making enemies	"He said to the deputy that I told the deputy was not an important person, to destroy me, on the other hand, he told me the deputy was going to fire me, to persuade me for behaving unsuitably with the deputy."
	Destroying the minds of two people about each other.	The backstabber wanted to leave the organization and needed me in the new organization, he reported to the CEO that he did not go to many missions or did not complete them, the CEO got angry and insulted. The backstabber then told me to resign because of the CEO's insult.
Bad defense	False support	My boss summoned me while I was on a mission. The backstabber under the pretext of supporting me, Told the boss: "You should not summon her at this time, she should take care of her child"
	False praise for expressing a false weakness	My subordinate was in contact with the manager and kept telling him: I am a good person but I am simple and others deceive me
Performance barrier	Failure to perform assigned activities	One of my employees did not perform the assigned activities and told the others: No positive activity has been performed in the new management period.
	Collaboration to reduce performance	I was selected as the CEO of the company. One of the managers who wanted to replace me formed a group with the sales managers and reduced the sales.
	barriers are created to achieve goals	We procured the raw materials from one of the holding companies. The manager of the supplier company increased the price of the products to destroy me.
	Acting against goals	One of my subordinate managers, with the approval of the head of the holding, spent expenses outside the business plan and caused a crisis in the company's economic performance.
Trapping	Create a problem and blame someone else	" "It was his responsibility to take care of the safe box. One day he left the safe open and the next day told others that I had not closed the safe box.
	Guide a person in the wrong direction	One of the employees asked me to give him the clothing coupon in cash, after registering in the system, he said: he gave up and took the original coupon from me in a friendly way. He immediately took the registration of the cash receipt system and the original coupon to the manager and said that due to the operator's mistake, I was given a coupon and I received cash and he destroyed me.
	Give the wrong order to create a problem.	The factory manager told me that we had to buy immediately to prevent the production line from stopping. He asked me to correspond with the supplier immediately to pay them. After making the correspondence for payment, he took the correspondence paper to the CEO and stated that I could not control the work or had an illegal relationship with the supplier.
	Get information to help and use it for destruction	My manager said that in order to solve the problems, it is necessary to provide pictures of the situation in the warehouse. He then sent the pictures to the CEO. He said that the warehouse has many problems.
Press on the hot spot	Use manager sensitivity	"The CEO of the group was sensitive about board membership and I did not like it, the backstabber said that I had no obligation then they had suggested to the manager that he asked me to become a member of the board."
	It was important Issue	The backstabber was friendly with the CEO and knew that it was important for the CEO to have obedient employees. The backstabber and I had a meeting for a deal. He asked me to buy his products at a higher price and I objected. After the meeting, he told the senior manager: In the meeting, your employee said: "In the purchasing unit, the senior manager also has no authority, and only I have the authority to decide."

OBT	Sub-techniques	Examples
	Make someone angry against another	The backstabber wanted to leave the organization and needed me in the new organization, he reported to the CEO that he did not go to many missions or did not complete them, the CEO got angry and insulted. The backstabber then told me to resign because of the CEO's insult.
	Emphasis on manager sensitivity issues	Everyone knew that the senior manager was very sensitive about communicating with one of the previously fired managers. My manager told the senior manager that I was in contact with the fired manager and that I would inform him and disrupt the work with his guidance.
Machine gun	Repeated an issue several Times	I made a deal and the seller received the money but did not deliver the car, although legal action was taken and the amount of money lost was acceptable. But he reminded the managers about this issue in all the meetings.
	The repeated expression of a defect by several people	Previously attending a sports program, was recorded as a mission. The new manager ordered: Attendance at the sports program, should not be registered as a mission, I announced the change to the staff. Several people went to the manager's office to protest and said: I have said: sports and staff are not important for the manager.
	Repeated by several people	One of my subordinates contacted the senior manager and told him that he was taking money from suppliers. At the same time, he coordinated with some other managers, and they all told the senior manager that I was taking money from suppliers.

4.2 Intermediate Coding (Axial Coding)

In this step, the introductory codes were converted into secondary codes to build the theory. In this step, we defined thirty codes as follows with WEBQDA software then a definition was written for each code (Table 2).

Table 2: Intermediate codes

No	Name (Intermediate codes)	Description (Definition)
1	Use manager sensitivity	The destructive person is aware of the manager's emotional sensitivities, she/he uses the manager's sensitivity to induce the manager that the person does not value important issues.
2	Create a problem and blame someone else	The backstabber does the wrong thing in order to blame others.
3	Combine reality with lies	Combining part of reality with lies, to make the story look more real.
4	Showing reality in a different way	Changing a part of reality to action or result that is not considered appropriate but the story looks more real.
5	Unrealistic objection	Exaggerating issues that are not true, and downplaying the results
6	Unrealistic changes in statistics	Changing or highlighting an issue in statistics in order to show poor results.
7	Show ineffective	Raising a problem that is not true.
8	Making enemies	The parties are told that the other party has slandered or destroyed you.
9	It was an important issue	Quoting false about some things sensitive to the audience, especially the senior manager.
10	Guide a person in the wrong direction	Friendly asks the person to do something illegal and then hand over the records of infractions to other people, especially the manager.
11	Exaggeration in issues	Exaggeration about nonworking time.
12	Falsely reported	Reporting False about running away from work.
13	False support	Explain the weaknesses of a person under the pretext of defending her/him.
14	Repeated an issue several Times	Repeating the weaknesses by several people at different times or at the same time.
15	Give the wrong order to create a problem.	The backstabber gives an order that is not correct, and after executing the command, uses the result as a real tool for destruction.
16	Unrealistic destruction, about organizational values / Ideological rule	Emphasizing value problems that do not affect work.
17	The repeated expression of a defect by several people	Quoting a lie or objection from several people at the same time.
18	Express unrealistic weakness	Expressing a weakness, which is made in the destructive mind.
19	Destroying the minds of two people about each other	By quoting false information from the parties, it makes both people enemies.
20	Make someone angry against another	False quotes about things that make the audience angry, especially the senior manager.
21	The dissatisfaction of employees/invitation to disobey	Making a person's performance ineffective.
22	False praise for expressing a false weakness	Praise the person while the backstabber knows others will oppose her/him.
23	False help request for expressing a false subject	Asking for help from others whose real purpose is not to get help but to express the weakness of others.

No	Name (Intermediate codes)	Description (Definition)
24	Repeated by several people	Repeat a weakness by several people.
25	Emphasis on manager sensitivity issues	Awareness of the manager's sensitivities and insinuating to the manager that a person does not pay attention to something important.
26	Failure to perform assigned activities	Due to the instability of the superior position, the employee prevents the achievement of results by not performing activities and informing others about the undesirable results.
27	Collaboration to reduce performance	Several people collude with each other to reduce performance and say the problem is with the superior manager.
28	Barriers are created to achieve goals	Prevent proper access to the inputs needed to achieve the goals.
29	Acting against goals	Using authority, activities that are ostensibly necessary for the company but conflict with the company's goals are performed to undermine some of the results, and then the poor results are reported.
30	Get information to help and use it for destruction	By deceiving the person, information about the weaknesses of the system is received from her/him and the same information is used to destroy her/him.

4.3 Advanced Coding and Theoretical Integration (Selective Coding/ Core Category)

In this step, the thirty codes that have been defined in the previous step were reviewed and similar codes were grouped to form core categories. Eight-core categories were identified that demonstrated Organizational Backstabbing Techniques. Each group was named with a title and we prepared the code map with WEBQDA software (Figure 2).

5 Discussion

The purpose of this study is to investigate Organization Backstabbing Techniques based on Grounded theory. Our research shows that a few studies have been done on Backstabbing and this issue has not been reviewed as one of the main issues in the field of organizational behavior while studying this issue can be very interesting for many people who work in the field of organizational behavior. The first group of studies that were reviewed in this article, is related to the subject of Anti-citizenship behavior or anti-social behavior. In these studies, destructive behaviors are examined as a subset of anti-citizenship behaviors, however, the destructive behavior of employees against others has not been studied in detail and refers to the general destructive behaviors towards the manager and the team which was mentioned in section 2-1-. In Section 2-2-, important studies conducted in the field of Backstabbing were reviewed and most of them have researched the definitions of this field and have examined the behaviors that take place in this area. In one of these studies, Backstabbing was mentioned as a dirty tactic used in the organization (Lincoln et al., 1982), but the question "What are these dirty tactics?" has not been answered in any research.

In this research, we identified eight categories of Backstabbing techniques. The eight main categories of Backstabbing-techniques are 1-Combined destruction, 2-Press on the hot spot, 3-Two-way destruction, 4-Simple destruction, 5-Bad defense, 6-Trapping, 7-Machine gun, and 8-Performance barrier. The eight main categories can divide into thirty sub-groups, which are mentioned in the section intermediate coding.
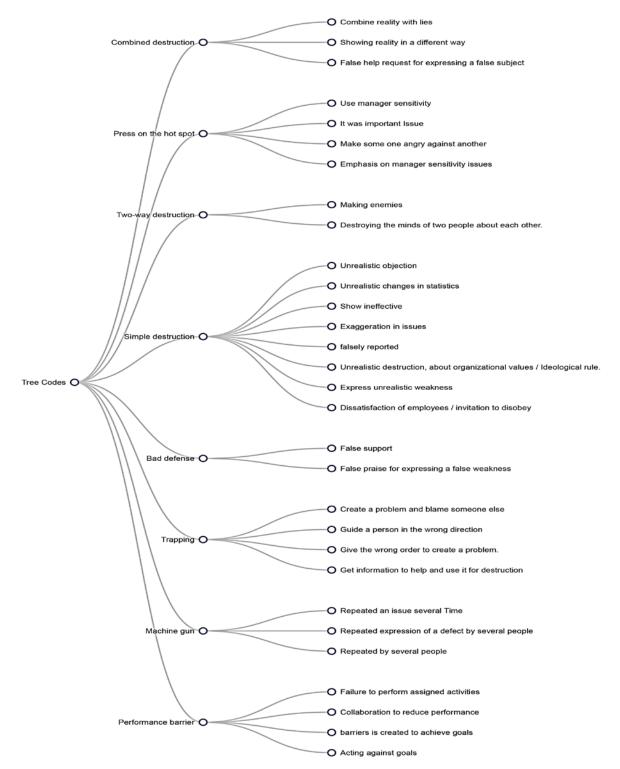
Figure 2: Advanced coding (map of core categories of organizational backstabbing techniques.

We are recommending researchers to study this issue in organizations of other countries, evaluate the amount of use of these techniques in organizations, evaluate the ability of each of the identified techniques in destroying others, and determine methods for fighting with Organizational Backstabbing.

The findings of this study show that Organizational Backstabbing behavior was observed in all nineteen organizations surveyed. Backstabbers use the following eight Organizational Backstabbing Techniques to destroy others, Table 3.

Table 3: Organizational Backstabbing Techniques.

No	Organizational Backstabbing Techniques	Description
1	Simple destruction	They destroy a person by expressing false weaknesses or exaggerating weaknesses through conversations, meetings, reports, statistics, or figures.
2	Combined destruction	They combine part of the truth with false stories to make the story of Backstabbing seem real.
3	Two-way destruction	They tell or show evidence to the first person that the second person is destroying you or is hostile to you, and on the other hand, they also tell or show evidence to the second person that the first person is destroying you or is your enemy.
4	Bad defense	They defend or reward the person in a way that they know will be harmful to her/him.
5	Performance barrier	They collude to prevent a person from achieving the desired results or prevent access to the required resources and information or reduce their performance that affects the results or take actions that are not in line with the goals.
6	Trapping	They guide the employee to do something that produces bad results, or they receive confidential information from that person and use the result and information to destroy that person.
7	Press on the hot spot	They are aware of the sensitivities of managers and supervisors, and by using this awareness they are instilling in managers that the issues that are important to you are not important to that person or that person is working against you.
8	Machine gun	Several people are repeating a real or false weakness, over and over again to make it more believable and important to others.

6 Conclusion

Organizational backstabbing behavior has been observed in eight techniques. The eight techniques of Organizational Backstabbing are Simple destruction, combined destruction, Two-way destruction, Bad defense, Performance barrier, Trapping, Press on the hot spot, and Machine gun. Some of these techniques have been used more than others and some of them are more complex than others. Some of these techniques are performed individually and others by several people. The backstabbers are both men and women. Each of the eight techniques includes some sub-techniques that are mentioned in intermediate coding. In some interviews, it was revealed that some of the backstabbers used several techniques at the same time. Organizational Backstabbing Techniques, sub-techniques, and examples are listed in Table 1.

7 Availability of Data and Material

Data can be made available by contacting the corresponding author.

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