Understanding Workplace Behavior through Organizational Culture and Complex Adaptive Systems Theory

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Abstract : Purpose: This article aims to rethink the phenomena of employee behavior as a product of a system. Both organizational culture and Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) theory emphasize that individual behavior depends on the specific system and the unique organizational culture. These two major theories are both represented in the field of organizational studies; however, they are rarely used together for the comprehensive understanding of workplace behavior. Methodology: By reviewing the literature we use key concepts stemming from organizational culture and CAS theory in order to show the similarities between these theories and create an enriched understanding of employee behavior. Findings: a) Workplace behavior is defined here as social cognition issue. b) Organizations are discussed here as complex systems, and cultures which drive and dictate the cognitive processes of agents in the system. c) Culture gives CAS theory a context which lets us see organizations not just as ever-changing and unpredictable, but as such systems that aim to create and maintain stability by recurring behavior. Conclusion: Applying the knowledge from culture and CAS theory sheds light on our present understanding of employee behavior, also emphasizes the importance of novel ways in organizational research and management.

Keywords : complex adaptive systems theory, employee behavior, organizational culture, stability

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