

# Human Capital and Inappropriate Behavior: Review and Recommendations

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## Abstract

Human capital is vital to the successful operation of any organization, the quality of which is threatened by inappropriate organizational behavior. Reducing or eliminating such behavior is critical. Organizations must establish a positive atmosphere that guarantees the rights of all employees to a workplace free from all forms of inappropriate behavior. Morrison proposed eight “people-focused principles of management” that would enable managers to activate and fully utilize the human capital in their organizations. This preliminary study suggests that adopting those principles would benefit organizations.

## Keywords

Human Capital, Human Resource Management, Activate Human Capital, Workplace Violence

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## 1. Background

Human capital is vital to the successful operation of any organization [1] [2] [3]. The quality of that capital is threatened by inappropriate behavior in those organizations. Assuring that such behavior does not occur is, therefore, critical to all organizations [4]. The extreme form of inappropriate behavior is workplace violence and until recently, relatively few organizations had effective programs to reduce such violence [5] [6] (see [7], p. 45 for an all-encompassing definition of workplace violence). Less extreme forms of inappropriate behavior include harassment, discrimination, and bullying to name just a few.

This extreme form of inappropriate behavior exists in both developed and developing countries [8]. Organizations in the United States see more than three deaths in the workplace every workday of the year [9]. Clearly, many of these fa-

talities are not the result of workplace violence, but workplace violence and lesser forms of inappropriate behavior do occur. Those lesser forms include such behaviors as gossiping, name-calling, threats, suggestive remarks, belittling, and the use of foul or dirty language. Despite the pervasiveness of the behavior, it is difficult to predict since most research on the topic is relatively new [8]. Inappropriate behavior and its associated costs and consequences must be reduced or eliminated, because organizations with higher incidences of inappropriate behavior are less effective [10]. Organizations must establish a positive atmosphere that guarantees the rights of all employees to a workplace free from not just violence but other forms of inappropriate behavior.

Such incidents are the result of outside forces—economic, social, and political forces and inside influences—inherent characteristics and dispositions of individuals, and the organization’s culture and managers [11]. The organization’s culture and its management, then, constitute a major force that can increase or decrease incidents of inappropriate behavior [12] [13]. Some organizations have cultures that are best described as “sick” and, as a result, have very high levels of inappropriate behavior. Sick organizations have one or more of these organizational culture characteristics: control-centered managers, an absence of trust, pessimism, vindictiveness, unclear expectations, lying, open criticism, low morale, favoritism, resignation by employees [14] [15] [16]. Organizations must act to help develop positive workplace environments to reduce or prevent such sick characteristics and inappropriate behavior.

## **2. Inappropriate Behavior**

As noted earlier, workplace violence can be seen as an all-encompassing form of inappropriate behavior or as only the extreme form. To understand inappropriate behavior more fully, a brief literature review identifies the more common forms.

### **2.1. Workplace Violence**

Workplace violence in some form is a frequent occurrence in organizations [17] [18]. The definition noted earlier indicates that behavior is labeled workplace violence if it is work-related and leads to negative work results, regardless of where it occurs, regardless of whether the harm is physical or emotional, and regardless of the relationship between perpetrator and victim [19] [20].

### **2.2. Sexual Harassment**

Another all too frequent form of inappropriate behavior is sexual harassment [21]. Sexual harassment ranges from dirty jokes, vulgar language, obscene gestures, unwanted physical contact, to sexual demands, and violent forms such as rape, assault, and homicide [22] [23] [24]. Much of this sexual harassment is never reported [25]. Males, as well as females, may be subjected to sexual harassment and the most common 16 to 24-year-age group is affected more than

other groups [26].

### 2.3. Non-Sexual Harassment

Another form of inappropriate behavior that is closely related to sexual harassment involves harassment that is non-sexual [27] [28]. Teasing, name-calling, insults, eye-rolling, belittling or demeaning language if done persistently constitute non-sexual harassment. Rudeness and incivility are also inappropriate behaviors [29] [30]. Comments about a person's religious beliefs, sending offensive cartoons or pictures, and off-color or racist jokes are also forms of non-sexual harassment [31]. Certain managerial behaviors may also fall into this category, for example, asking for personal favors, unnecessarily switching assignment or equipment to penalize an individual.

### 2.4. Bullying

Closely related to harassment is bullying. Some research suggests that 10% - 20% of workers are bullied each year [32] [33]. Other research suggests that bullying impacts as many as 96% of workers [34] and can result in emotional and physical costs [35] [36]. Those costs include litigation, lowered productivity, morale, and turnover and can impact the whole organization [37] [38]. One estimate is that U.S. businesses lose \$300 billion per year due to bullying [39].

Publicly disciplining an employee has been shown to be a form of bullying [40] [41]. Even if not face-to-face, bullying can occur with electronic aggression, or cyberbullying [42]. This form of bullying is especially impactful because it can occur 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and involves cell phones and computers and email, text messages, social media sites, blogs, or chat rooms to transmit embarrassing pictures, videos, websites, or even fake profiles or bios [43]. Further, it may be done anonymously and hence difficult to trace or to delete.

### 2.5. Abusive Supervision

Abusive supervision is closely related to bullying [44]. Poorly trained managers or those with aggressive personalities may display such abuse and create dysfunctional environments. If those at the top of the organization are abusive, it is likely that lower level managers will do the same [45]. Females are more likely to describe certain behaviors as abusive [46], but all abuse is inappropriate and results in turnover, poor attendance, poor performance, lower job and life satisfaction, or lower levels of commitment [47] [48].

### 2.6. Other Inappropriate Behavior

Behaviors that cannot easily be placed into one of the earlier categories may occur. These other forms of inappropriate behavior can range from physical attacks or assaults that harm a person or property, to social behaviors (based on race, gender, religion, sexual orientation) that harm a person's standing or acceptance in his or her group, to emotional behaviors that harm a person's psychological well-being [19] [49] (for a more substantial list, see [7] pp. 46-47).

### 3. Reducing or Preventing Inappropriate Organizational Behavior

To protect and preserve its human capital, organizations must develop positive workplace atmospheres [50]. Human capital includes not just the people an organization employs but also the way in which they perform their jobs. Research and the evidence from practicing organizations have identified the importance of human capital as one crucial factor in the effective performance of organizations [51] [52]. Effective human capital management is, then, a vital strategic concern for organizations [53] [54]. It involves clearly understanding how the organization competes, the kinds of human resources necessary to enhance its ability to compete, and appropriate methods for attracting and developing those resources [55].

Organizations need to develop proactive policies for dealing with their employees not only to meet its legal obligations but also its social ones. The respectful treatment of employees should be an important component of its corporate social responsibility [56] [57]. Proactive policies enable the organization to enhance its reputation and attract workers who would contribute to the achievement of the organization's objectives [56] [57] [58]. Organizations should also provide opportunities for employees to learn and improve their positions [59] [60] [61]. These policies and practices establish the psychological contract between the organization its employees [62] [63].

### 4. Activating Human Capital

How may an organization develop the sort of culture that leads to such proactive policies and practices? Recently Morrison [53], using his experience as a Naval officer, businessman, lawyer, and civic leader, proposed eight "people-focused principles of management" that would enable managers to fully utilize the human capital in their organizations. Morrison's approach has two objectives. The first is to have managers engage in self-analysis by asking if what they are doing is effective in motivating their employees. Are they applying each of the principles to good effect? The second is to get managers to interact with inspiring leaders so as "to manage people, not positions". Seek out those who are effective and engage with them to learn how to achieve the same good results. Morrison suggests that Activate Human Capital produces a different way of thinking about management. Manager's perspectives shift from seeing their employees as merely subordinates to valuable human capital capable of initiating their own contributions to profitability.

The "principles" then are:

- 1) Give people a purpose—make sure all employees see the "big picture",
- 2) Communicate widely—information should not be confined or restricted to select individuals,
- 3) Accommodate/manage change—adapting to social, economic, cultural and other changes benefits the organization,

- 4) Create a culture of worth—provide opportunities for employees to grow and assure that they are seen as valuable contributors to the organization’s purpose,
- 5) Create a culture of hope—trust employees and avoid creating fear among them,
- 6) Reward performance—utilize a variety of reward systems,
- 7) Create a vision of participation in determining the future of the company—more than a simple purpose, a vision can inspire employees, and
- 8) Express gratitude—saying thanks, caring for those in need, help employees when needed.

Some of the ideas underly these principles are not new; for instance, individual goal setting [64] [65], communication [66] [67], rewarding performance [68] [69], managing change [70] [71], participation [72] [73], and trust [14] [74]. However, Morrison’s approach is unique by focusing on individual performance and development. The principles of creating a culture of worth and hope and expressing gratitude appear novel and important. What is missing is any empirical support for those principles. That is the purpose of this study. While preliminary, it should cast light on the impact of those principles on inappropriate workplace behavior.

## 5. Hypotheses

Following from the eight principles, several hypotheses present themselves:

H1: Inappropriate behavior is less likely when supervisor/managers give people a purpose.

H2: Inappropriate behavior is less likely when supervisor/managers communicate widely (and appropriately).

H3: Inappropriate behavior is less likely when supervisor/managers accommodate/manage change.

H4: Inappropriate behavior is less likely when supervisor/managers create a culture of worth.

H5: Inappropriate behavior is less likely when supervisor/managers create a culture of hope.

H6: Inappropriate behavior is less likely when supervisor/managers reward performance.

H7: Inappropriate behavior is less likely when supervisor/managers create a vision of participation in determining the future of the company.

H8: Inappropriate behavior is less likely when supervisor/managers express gratitude.

Two other supervisory or managerial behaviors which seem to be related to one or more of the principles suggest two additional hypotheses:

H9: Inappropriate behavior is less likely when supervisor/managers provide feedback about individual performance (appropriate feedback which avoids chastising in public).

H10: Inappropriate behavior is less likely when individual performance feedback is average or better.

## 6. Methodology

To tentatively test the eight principles, an online survey questionnaire was prepared and made available from February through June of 2018. The questionnaire was constructed using Survey Monkey<sup>®</sup>, announced through social media (LinkedIn<sup>®</sup>, Twitter<sup>®</sup>, Facebook<sup>®</sup>) groups identified as workplace violence or bullying. The first part of the questionnaire listed specific behaviors that would likely to be associated with each of the eight principles. The second part identified other specific examples of inappropriate behaviors obtained from Van Fleet and Van Fleet [7] and asked respondents about both their own personal experiences with each of the inappropriate behaviors and their observations of those behaviors occurring in the organization but not directly involving them. Finally, the third part of the survey requested demographic background information including age group, gender, race/ethnicity, level of education, the primary language spoken in the home where the respondent grew up, religious preference, current employment status, total years or work experience, number of years of supervisory/managerial experience, and their ZIP code.

For part one of the survey, specific behaviors that would likely be associated with each of the eight principles were developed. Those behaviors and the corresponding principles are:

- 1) Shows how your work contributes to the organization (give people a purpose),
- 2) Provides you with information about what is going on in the organization (Communicate widely),
- 3) Helps you make changes to improve conditions or performance (Accommodate/manage change),
- 4) Helps you develop a sense of self-worth (Create a culture of worth),
- 5) Trusts you and enables you to hope for better things in the future (Create a culture of hope),
- 6) Rewards performance (Reward performance),
- 7) Involves you in decisions (Create a vision of participation in determining the future of the company), and
- 8) Thanks you for your efforts (Expresses gratitude).

Respondents were asked about the extent (not at all, a little bit, to some extent, quite a bit, a lot) of each of these in their organizations. As noted above, two other behaviors that could be related to one or more of the principles were included. They are:

- 1) Provides feedback about your performance, and
- 2) If feedback is provided, what does that feedback say about your performance (below, average, above)?

For part two of the survey, respondents were asked about the extent of specific inappropriate behaviors. Those behaviors were:

- 1) Criticism or humiliation (sarcastic or belittling words; talking down to),
- 2) Gossiping or talking about you behind your back,
- 3) Knowingly misstating or repeating out of context what you say,
- 4) Making demands of a sexual nature,
- 5) Name calling,
- 6) Threats,
- 7) Suggestive remarks or sexual innuendos (e.g. words with double meanings to indicate sexual content),
- 8) “Bad” words (e.g., foul words, derogatory, cursing, “dirty”),
- 9) Used electronic means (email, Facebook, etc.) to embarrass you,
- 10) Internet/cyberbullying,
- 11) Ignored or excluded you from meetings or activities,
- 12) Denied or refused reasonable requests that you have made,
- 13) Assigned you excessive workloads or unrealistic deadlines to punish or harass you,
- 14) Damaged or stole your personal property,
- 15) Physically hurt you—pushing, tripping, kicking, hitting, and
- 16) Demanded or coerced sexual activity.

After the closing date of June 2018, all responses were collected and examined for usability. Incomplete responses were omitted from the results.

## 7. Results

### 7.1. The Respondents

A total of 206 usable responses were obtained from across the United States. As shown in **Table 1**, they tended to be Caucasian (68.9%), predominantly female (73.7%), aged 26 - 40 (34.9%) and 41 - 59 (37.8%), well educated (83.0% were college graduates), fully employed (76.2%), and experienced (22.58 years). This group of respondents is, then, somewhat different from those of previously published surveys [40] [75]. Differences in the results of these surveys may be due to the time of the survey, the demographics of the respondents, the nature of the questions asked, or other issues. Nevertheless, the current study involves a large enough sample to provide tentative tests of the hypotheses and draw some comparisons to earlier work.

### 7.2. Correlations

As a first step to examining the relations between the behaviors and the observed incidents, a correlation matrix was developed. As shown in **Table 2**, the behaviors (identified as H1 - H10) are highly correlated with one exception being that between providing feedback and the results of the feedback. The significant correlations among the incidents are positive suggesting that in environments where one form occurs, others are also likely to occur. As predicted, all significant correlations between the behaviors and the incidents are negative, suggesting that the more the behavior occurs the less incidents happen. While these results support the hypotheses, a more robust examination is available.

**Table 1.** Respondent characteristics (n = 206).

Age	24 -- 19 - 25
	72 -- 26 - 40
	78 -- 41 - 59
	32 -- 60 or older
Gender	152 females
	53 males
	1 prefer not to answer
Race	3 American Indian/Native American
	9 Asian
	11 Black/African American
	28 Hispanic/Latino
	142 White/Caucasian
Education	13 other/prefer not to answer
	6 high school or GED
	20 junior/community college or some college
	6 technical school
	67 college bachelor's degree
	104 college beyond the bachelor's degree
Languagespoken at home	3 other
	178 English
	14 Spanish
	14 other/prefer not to answer
Religion	3 Hinduism
	3 Judaism
	11 Mormon
	2 Muslim
	46 Protestant
	49 Roman Catholic
Current employment status	92 Other/No Preference
	157 full-time
	27 part-time
	11 unemployed
	7 retired
Experience (years)	4 prefer not to answer
	22.58 Mean
Supervisory/managerial experience	7.29 Mean
ZIP codes	91 AZ
	28 other states
	8 non-U.S.

If the hypotheses are correct, respondents who identify their organizations as having little of the eight principles should also report more incidents of inappropriate behavior. To examine this, an average for the eight principles was obtained and then the data were separated at the mean. The Lo group would be those with lower indicators of the principles and the Hi group those with higher levels. The results shown in **Table 3** clearly indicate that this is indeed the case. There are highly significant differences between the two groups not only for the eight principles but also for the two feedback items.



**Table 2.** Correlations among behaviors and incents.

	H1	H2	H3	H4	H5	H6	H7	H8	H9	H10	Crt	Gos	Kno	Mak	Nam	Thr	Sug	Bad	Oth	Usd	Int	Ign	Den	Asg	Dmg	Phy	Dnd	Ors
<b>H1</b>	1.00	0.76	0.76	0.73	0.70	0.70	0.65	0.73	0.62	0.31	-0.33	-0.30	-0.33	<b>-0.13</b>	<b>-0.15</b>	-0.34	<b>-0.17</b>	-0.25	-0.33	<b>-0.16</b>	<b>-0.21</b>	-0.26	-0.25	-0.29	<b>0.08</b>	<b>-0.15</b>	<b>-0.05</b>	<b>-0.06</b>
<b>H2</b>		1.00	0.77	0.74	0.74	0.68	0.71	0.69	0.61	0.37	-0.33	-0.31	-0.31	<b>-0.14</b>	-0.24	-0.34	<b>-0.19</b>	-0.23	-0.32	<b>-0.15</b>	<b>-0.21</b>	-0.25	<b>-0.17</b>	-0.35	<b>0.06</b>	<b>-0.11</b>	<b>-0.05</b>	<b>-0.21</b>
<b>H3</b>			1.00	0.82	0.74	0.70	0.68	0.70	0.68	0.27	-0.28	-0.25	-0.35	<b>-0.09</b>	<b>-0.21</b>	-0.28	<b>-0.17</b>	-0.27	-0.33	<b>-0.17</b>	<b>-0.21</b>	-0.24	<b>-0.22</b>	-0.33	<b>0.11</b>	<b>-0.03</b>	<b>-0.12</b>	<b>-0.19</b>
<b>H4</b>				1.00	0.80	0.72	0.67	0.77	0.68	0.31	-0.29	-0.27	-0.38	<b>-0.05</b>	<b>-0.20</b>	-0.23	<b>-0.14</b>	-0.24	-0.31	<b>-0.21</b>	<b>-0.20</b>	-0.29	-0.29	-0.32	<b>0.11</b>	<b>-0.09</b>	<b>-0.10</b>	<b>-0.17</b>
<b>H5</b>					1.00	0.73	0.70	0.72	0.62	0.38	-0.31	-0.30	-0.34	<b>-0.16</b>	<b>-0.16</b>	-0.24	<b>-0.18</b>	-0.24	-0.26	-0.24	<b>-0.22</b>	-0.28	-0.26	-0.33	<b>0.07</b>	<b>-0.04</b>	<b>-0.09</b>	<b>-0.17</b>
<b>H6</b>						1.00	0.70	0.69	0.67	0.22	-0.31	-0.27	-0.38	<b>-0.15</b>	-0.24	<b>-0.21</b>	<b>-0.14</b>	<b>-0.22</b>	<b>-0.22</b>	-0.23	<b>-0.18</b>	-0.30	-0.28	-0.30	<b>0.09</b>	<b>0.06</b>	<b>-0.05</b>	<b>-0.10</b>
<b>H7</b>							1.00	0.66	0.54	0.31	-0.36	-0.33	-0.35	<b>-0.19</b>	-0.26	-0.34	<b>-0.17</b>	<b>-0.20</b>	-0.30	<b>-0.18</b>	<b>-0.19</b>	-0.25	-0.26	-0.33	<b>0.11</b>	<b>0.06</b>	<b>-0.09</b>	<b>-0.15</b>
<b>H8</b>								1.00	0.68	0.40	-0.32	-0.34	-0.42	<b>-0.17</b>	-0.32	-0.33	<b>-0.17</b>	-0.34	-0.41	-0.24	<b>-0.14</b>	-0.39	-0.40	-0.30	<b>0.00</b>	<b>-0.07</b>	<b>-0.11</b>	<b>-0.05</b>
<b>H9</b>									1.00	<b>0.15</b>	-0.29	-0.27	-0.27	<b>-0.20</b>	-0.25	-0.27	<b>-0.19</b>	<b>-0.07</b>	<b>-0.20</b>	<b>-0.13</b>	-0.28	-0.25	<b>-0.16</b>	-0.28	<b>-0.07</b>	<b>-0.05</b>	<b>-0.11</b>	<b>-0.15</b>
<b>H10</b>										1.00	-0.32	-0.25	<b>-0.16</b>	<b>0.06</b>	<b>-0.09</b>	-0.35	<b>0.02</b>	<b>-0.20</b>	<b>-0.19</b>	<b>-0.17</b>	<b>-0.12</b>	<b>-0.19</b>	<b>-0.19</b>	-0.24	<b>0.03</b>	<b>0.01</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>-0.14</b>
<b>Crt</b>											1.00	0.88	0.78	<b>0.23</b>	0.63	0.52	0.72	0.28	0.71	0.74	0.74	0.70	0.63	0.65	<b>0.08</b>	<b>-0.01</b>	<b>-0.03</b>	0.32
<b>Gos</b>												1.00	0.75	0.29	0.54	0.40	0.73	0.39	0.65	0.71	0.72	0.66	0.73	0.57	<b>0.07</b>	<b>-0.04</b>	<b>-0.06</b>	0.32
<b>Kno</b>													1.00	0.26	0.66	0.57	0.32	0.33	0.72	0.63	0.33	0.77	0.78	0.72	<b>0.03</b>	<b>-0.01</b>	<b>-0.04</b>	0.36
<b>Mak</b>														1.00	0.40	0.42	0.41	0.33	<b>0.21</b>	<b>0.07</b>	<b>0.02</b>	0.30	0.27	<b>0.18</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>0.13</b>	<b>-0.01</b>
<b>Nam</b>															1.00	0.55	<b>0.20</b>	0.30	0.51	0.37	<b>0.06</b>	0.74	0.54	0.41	<b>-0.05</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>-0.04</b>	0.32
<b>Thr</b>																1.00	<b>0.11</b>	<b>0.18</b>	0.58	0.30	<b>0.18</b>	0.53	0.47	0.61	<b>-0.03</b>	<b>-0.02</b>	<b>-0.02</b>	0.38
<b>Sug</b>																	1.00	0.50	0.49	0.66	0.83	<b>0.20</b>	<b>0.16</b>	0.38	<b>-0.03</b>	<b>-0.01</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>-0.02</b>
<b>Bad</b>																		1.00	0.39	<b>0.18</b>	<b>-0.05</b>	0.37	0.36	<b>0.14</b>	<b>0.04</b>	<b>-0.01</b>	<b>0.05</b>	<b>0.02</b>
<b>Oth</b>																			1.00	0.48	0.29	0.62	0.62	0.56	<b>0.01</b>	<b>-0.01</b>	<b>-0.06</b>	<b>0.26</b>
<b>Usd</b>																				1.00	0.59	0.71	0.67	0.36	<b>-0.02</b>	<b>-0.01</b>	<b>-0.03</b>	<b>0.03</b>
<b>Int</b>																					1.00	<b>0.04</b>	<b>0.06</b>	0.75	<b>0.08</b>	<b>0.04</b>	<b>-0.02</b>	0.11
<b>Ign</b>																						1.00	0.75	0.37	<b>0.05</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>-0.03</b>	<b>0.04</b>
<b>Den</b>																							1.00	0.41	<b>0.06</b>	<b>-0.01</b>	<b>-0.05</b>	<b>0.01</b>
<b>Asg</b>																								1.00	<b>0.00</b>	<b>-0.02</b>	<b>-0.01</b>	<b>0.39</b>
<b>Dmg</b>																									1.00	<b>0.22</b>	<b>0.05</b>	<b>0.06</b>
<b>Phy</b>																										1.00	0.25	<b>0.12</b>
<b>Dnd</b>																											1.00	<b>-0.01</b>
<b>Ors</b>																												1.00
<b>n</b>	206	206	206	206	206	206	206	206	206	183	134	136	127	116	119	120	120	127	112	122	116	136	127	123	114	112	112	89
<b>Mn</b>	3.22	3.34	3.02	2.93	3.21	2.76	2.93	3.30	3.17	4.20	18.93	20.40	12.71	2.54	5.22	5.91	8.74	22.45	14.72	5.17	1.10	9.85	9.60	14.76	0.55	0.07	0.30	0.38
<b>SD</b>	1.35	1.32	1.34	1.46	1.46	1.39	1.37	1.42	1.24	1.16	41.61	41.83	26.80	12.27	17.55	18.88	37.20	45.29	35.61	21.34	5.52	22.07	22.45	43.50	2.46	0.49	2.03	2.20

NOTE: All correlations  $p \leq 0.01$  except those bolded. KEY: H1-Shows how your work contributes to the organization; H2-Provides you with information about what is going on in the organization; H3-Helps you make changes to improve conditions or performance; H4-Helps you develop a sense of self-worth; H5-Trusts you and enables you to hope for better things in the future; H6-Rewards performance; H7-Involves you in decisions; H8-Thanks you for your efforts; H9-Provides feedback about your performance; H10-If feedback is provided, what does that feedback say about your performance; Crt-Criticism or humiliation (sarcastic or belittling words; talking down to); Gos-Gossiping or talking about you behind your back; Kno-Knowingly misstating or repeating out of context what you say; Mak-Making demands of a sexual nature; Nam-Name calling; Thr-Threats; Sug-Suggestive remarks or sexual innuendos (e.g. words with double meanings to indicate sexual content); Bad-“Bad” words (e.g., foul words, derogatory, cursing, “dirty”); Oth-Other verbal abuse; Usd-Used electronic means (email, Facebook, etc.) to embarrass you; Int-Internet/cyberbullying; Ign-Ignored or excluded you from meetings or activities; Den-Denied or refused reasonable requests that you have made; Asg-Assigned you excessive workloads or unrealistic deadlines to punish or harass you; Dmg-Damaged or stole your personal property; Phy-Physically hurt you—pushing, tripping, kicking, hitting; Dnd-Demanded or coerced sexual activity; Ors-Other similar incidents; Mn-Mean; SD-Standard Deviation.

**Table 3.** Eight principles of activate human capital and feedback.

To what extent does your manager/supervisor do the following?	Mean	
	Lo (n = 94)	Hi (n = 112)
1) Shows how your work contributes to the organization	2.11	4.15
2) Provides you with information about what is going on in the organization	2.21	4.29
3) Helps you make changes to improve conditions or performance	1.91	3.95
4) Helps you develop a sense of self-worth	1.65	4.00
5) Trusts you and enables you to hope for better things in the future	1.91	4.30
6) Rewards performance	1.63	3.71
7) Involves you in decisions	1.87	3.82
8) Thanks you for your efforts	2.14	4.27
<b>Feedback</b>		
To what extent does your manager/supervisor provide feedback about your performance? [2 reported no feedback]	2.30	3.91
If you receive feedback, what does that feedback say about your performance? [2 reported no feedback]	2.90	4.42

Note:  $p < 0.001$  for all differences. Responses for the first nine were: 1-Not at all; 2-A little bit; 3-To some degree; 4-Quite a bit; 5-A lot. Responses for the last item were: 1-Well below average; 2-A little below average; 3-Average; 4-A little above average; 5-Well above average.

### 7.3. Personal Experiences

The important question is: then, are the reported incidents of inappropriate behavior also significantly different for the two groups? A few respondents in efforts to emphasize the incidents reported them as occurring for huge numbers (100,000; 10,000; 1000). Those were recorded as 100 to be more in line with others. Personal experiences were examined first. As shown in **Table 4**, 13 of the 18 (72%) examples of inappropriate behaviors were significantly different. All but one of the verbal issues was significantly different. Most of the issues not found to be significantly different were those with very low reports involving personal property, physical harm, and actual sexual activity. These results, then, support the hypotheses.

### 7.4. Observations

The pattern for observed incidents is quite similar to those of personal experiences. Six of the nine (67%) of the verbal issues were significant as were four of the nine (44%) of the others. The issues involving personal property, physical harm, and actual sexual activity were again not found to be significantly different. Overall, these results, too, support the hypotheses (**Table 5**).

## 8. Discussion

Organizations cannot ignore inappropriate behavior [22]. Starting with top management, steps must be taken not only to eliminate dysfunctional aspects of

**Table 4.** Personal experiences of workplace incidents.

	Average number of incidents	
	Lo (n = 94)	Hi (n = 112)
<b>Verbal Issues</b>		
Criticism or humiliation (sarcastic or belittling words; talking down to)	22.82	6.43***
Gossiping or talking about you behind your back	25.31	6.39***
Knowingly misstating or repeating out of context what you say	15.27	3.03***
Making demands of a sexual nature	2.74	0.71
Name calling	5.71	1.53**
Threats	6.33	2.07*
Suggestive remarks or sexual innuendos (e.g. words with double meanings to indicate sexual content)	9.81	2.44*
“Bad” words (e.g., foul words, derogatory, cursing, “dirty”)	23.79	10.25**
Other verbal abuse	15.32	4.45***
<b>Other Issues</b>		
Used electronic means (email, Facebook, etc.) to embarrass you	6.52	0.33**
Internet/cyberbullying	1.29	0.13*
Ignored or excluded you from meetings or activities	12.43	2.76***
Denied or refused reasonable requests that you have made	11.44	2.44***
Assigned you excessive workloads or unrealistic deadlines to punish or harass you	18.65	1.17***
Damaged or stole your personal property	0.28	0.69
Physically hurt you -- pushing, tripping, kicking, hitting	0.09	0.00
Demanded or coerced sexual activity	0.35	0.02
Other similar incidents [please describe]	0.31	0.10

Note: \* $p \leq 0.10$ ; \*\* $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq 0.01$ .

**Table 5.** Observations of workplace incidents.

	Average number of incidents	
	Lo (n = 94)	Hi (n = 112)
<b>Verbal Issues</b>		
Criticism or humiliation (sarcastic or belittling words; talking down to)	21.33	7.49***
Gossiping or talking behind the back of someone	31.24	15.55***
Knowingly misstating or repeating out of context what someone said	23.17	3.91***
Making demands of a sexual nature	1.06	0.48
Name calling	12.69	4.27**
Threats	9.77	1.33**
Suggestive remarks or sexual innuendos (e.g. words with double meanings to indicate sexual content)	14.66	7.71

**Continued**

“Bad” words (e.g., foul words, derogatory, cursing, “dirty”)	59.83	22.71
Other verbal abuse	13.23	4.56**
<b>Other Issues</b>		
Used electronic means (email, Facebook, etc.) to embarrass someone	7.81	1.06**
Internet/cyberbullying	4.05	1.18
Someone ignored or excluded from meetings or activities	20.33	4.00**
Someone denied or refused reasonable requests	16.94	3.89***
Someone’s personal property was damaged or stolen	2.64	1.02***
Someone touched inappropriately	3.29	0.88
Someone physically attacked -- pushing, tripping, kicking, hitting	0.30	0.19
Someone engaged in sexual activity	0.21	0.38
Other similar incidents [please describe]	1.41	0.05

Note: \* $p \leq 0.10$ ; \*\* $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq 0.01$ .

the culture but also to establish a positive one [76] [77]. Applying the eight people-focused principles of management would be a major step in that effort. Organizations must develop and articulate strong policies that include the explicit prohibition of forms of inappropriate behavior, especially harassment and bullying, but also include explicit support for communicating about inappropriate behavior. Such communication should involve not merely reporting it when it occurs but conversations about just what is acceptable and unacceptable in the organization.

Feedback must be improved. Day-to-day interactions between managers and their workers should occur. Performance feedback should be frequent and honest [76]. Performance should be recognized and appreciated with rewards that are based on clear rules and procedures [76]. Employees and managers might hold discussion sessions to go over the principles espoused in Morrison’s work as a way of further developing a positive culture. These efforts will help to establish a culture of both hope and worth in which all members of the organization feel that their efforts are valued by the organization.

All employees, both managers and non-managers, should be trained not just in job or task functions but also to recognize stress or situations that might lead to inappropriate behavior [77]. Training will establish respect and trust as part of the organization’s culture [74] [78]. That training should also note that organizations must be flexible in terms of enforcing rules and regulations [79] [80]. Flexibility also enables organizations to accommodate and manage change where necessary.

## 9. Limitations and Future Research

The most obvious limitation of this study is the retrospective nature of the method used. How accurate are individual memories? Are respondents able to ac-

curately report their experiences [81]? Recollections are clearly important as they are important to the individual and impact interactions with others in and out of the organization. In addition, there is research to suggest that retrospective reports are accurate and useful [82] [83].

A second limitation involves the use of social networking to obtain respondents which resulted in a non-random, convenience sample. A more carefully-focused sample representing a carefully designed population would have provided more meaningful results. Nevertheless, the findings presented here suggest that further research on the topic is warranted, including a more carefully-focused sample.

While there already is research to suggest how organizations and their managers should act to reduce or eliminate inappropriate behavior [11] [12], more specific research needs to be conducted regarding the principles of Activate Human Capital. Developing a fuller understanding of inappropriate behavior and how those principles might help is an area for future research. Specific hypotheses need to be articulated and then tested in a variety of settings.

Would the same result be found in very different organizations—profit/non-profit, secular/religious, education, manufacturing, and so on? Information from that research would then enable testing whether the ideas presented hold for different organizations or only for selected types and whether the results are generalizable or pertain only to a particular industry or particular country. It could also help extend research on predicting and controlling individual most likely to engage in such behavior [84] [85]. Future research should carefully examine both the causes and the effects of such behavior [44].

This project suggests that future research should consider the interaction of the forces underlying inappropriate workplace behavior in addition to viewing them separately as has been frequently done in the past.

## 10. Conclusions

Regrettably, existing research makes clear that inappropriate behavior in the workplace is alive and well in organizations. Such behavior may consist of actions by managers toward employees, or employees toward other employees, managers, or the organization itself. It may include physical acts against individuals or a company, sexual or other forms of harassment including bullying, and work sabotage. Or it may consist of less damaging actions, such as name-calling, insults, teasing, dirty looks, or eye rolling. Any sort of coercive behavior that leads to negative emotional harm is unacceptable.

The legal and economic consequences of failing to address inappropriate workplace behavior are not trivial [86], so organizations must move quickly to balance the rights of all employees to supportive and safe workplaces [87]. If genuinely applied, the concepts embodied in Activate Human Capital would be a major step in this direction. If we better understood the causes and warning signs of inappropriate behavior, preventative action could also be employed. Numerous suggestions for preventing and dealing with workplace violence are

present in the current literature and could be applied to all forms of inappropriate behavior. It is hoped that the examination provided in this project will stimulate ideas for future work that will further enhance the positive cultures of organizations.

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### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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