

### **Employee Satisfaction and theft: Testing Climate Perceptions as a Mediator**

This paper looks at the impact of employee dissatisfaction and their perceptions of the organizations climate for theft and how that influences employee deviance. The research comes from over 1000 respondents at 19 different supermarket companies

#### **Background:**

- About 1 and 3 employees admit to stealing from their employers, and this scales to be a pretty major problem for any large retailer.
- Organizational climate perceptions are considered in this paper and look to see what factors “encourage” an employee towards deviance.
- Employee deviance can take on many forms: production deviance, political deviance, property deviance and personal aggression.
  - o This paper focuses mainly on production and property deviance.
- Satisfied employees tend to take have prosocial behaviors. Previous studies have shown a strong link between job dissatisfaction and production deviance in the retail industry.
- Many studies have acknowledged the importance of situational factors to employee deviance, but we need to better understand the *climate* for theft to create more targeted situational factors to deter employee deviance.
- Climate for theft includes the opportunity to steal and the perceived and communicated norms of the organization, management and work group.
  - o This climate is centered around *norms* that the place supervisor has put into place.
  - o This paper examines the impact of the climate for theft vs established norms.
- This paper contains feedback from over 1000 responses from 19 different supermarket companies

#### **Findings:**

- As verified in many other reports, there is a strong relationship between job dissatisfaction and theft.
- It is difficult to ask employees directly about theft they have committed as well as the perceived ease of theft from their workplace. In lieu of direct questions, employees were asked to agree or disagree with statements like “I could easily take money or merchandise from my employer” or “I could easily use employee discount privileges for friends.”
- Many respondents strongly agreed that they felt their coworkers thought it would be acceptable for the respondent to take company items and money without permission.
  - o Many also agreed with the statement that they could steal items/money whenever they wanted.

#### **Implications:**

- Surveying employees and trying to get an idea of how acceptable and difficult theft is within a certain store can shed some light on shrink issues.
- Changing the climate on the perceived acceptance of theft is imperative to fight internal theft.
- Internal theft can be exacerbated when the employees are dissatisfied with their job, work in a climate where they feel theft is acceptable by coworkers/management, and have a poor relationship with place supervisors.
- Creating a climate that theft is not ok can mitigate employee deviance even if they have a bad relationship with the place manager.