Chapter 27 – IFPO -CPO

Workplace Crime and Deviance

Purpose

▶ Employee theft can increase company costs significantly. One of the best ways to prevent theft is to create an environment where employees know theft allegations will be taken seriously and investigated.

Introduction

▶ In any organization, some employees will steal. The more opportunity allowed for theft, the more theft there will be.

▶ In addition to the theft of products, materials, tools, or information, acts of sabotage may be committed.

▶ The problem is not that everyone steals or does damage; the problem is that everyone has the potential to do so.

▶ As a result, no one is beyond reasonable suspicion.

Theories of Workplace Crime

For the purposes of preventing workplace crime, there are a few theories that are particularly relevant to theft prevention:

▶ General Deterrence Theory

▶ Routine Activity Theory

▶ Social Learning Theory

▶ Techniques of Neutralization

▶ General Strain Theory

General Deterrence Theory

▶ Deterrence is, perhaps, the best-known theory of criminal behavior.

▶ Developed by Cesare Baccaria in 1764.

  ▶ There is a logical rationale for punishment: To decrease crime.

  ▶ There are two benefits arising from punishing someone caught committing a crime:

    1. First, that person might learn his or her lesson and not commit the crime again. (*Specific Deterrence*)

    2. Others might witness the punishment and learn that committing the crime is not worth the consequences. (*General Deterrence*)

▶ Three concepts influence the effectiveness of punishment.

1. *Punishment certainty* is the likelihood of getting caught.

2. *Punishment celerity* refers to the swiftness of the punishment. The quicker a punishment occurs, the more of a deterrent it will create.

3. *Punishment severity*. The more severe a punishment is, the more deterrence it will cause.

Routine Activity Theory

- In an attempt to explain increases in crime several decades ago, Cohen and Felson (1979) developed their theory of routine activity.

- This theory applies only to "direct-contact predatory violations," which includes theft, robbery, and other crimes that involve taking possession of something illegally.

- Crime is a product of three circumstances happening at the same time and in the same place:

1. The presence of a *motivated offender*.

   - It is assumed that everyone could be a motivated offender.

2. The presence of a *suitable target*.

   - Financial value

   - Ease of moving the item

   - Accessibility

   - Visibility

3. Absence of a *capable guardian*.

   - If a guardian is present (involved), punishment is increased to near certainly, so crime is less likely to occur.

   - A capable guardian can be anyone who might report the theft, or even an inanimate object, such as a noticeable security camera, that could result in the perpetrator getting caught.

Social Learning Theory

▶ Generally, is applied most often to describe how children learn from their parents and peers, and how that influences their decision of whether crime is an acceptable behavior.

▶ Two categories of learning can occur:

1. Learn from peers (or other sources) how to commit crimes. Learning better ways to commit the crime makes it less likely that the perpetrator will get caught.

2. Perception that crime, or certain types of crimes in certain situations, is acceptable behavior.

   ▶ If someone notices that other employees are stealing, they are more likely to do it themselves. Not only because it makes it more obvious that it is possible to get away with the crime, but because it makes them feel like it is not taboo. The more often someone is exposed to this message, the more accepted it becomes.

Techniques of Neutralization

▶ Offenders neutralize (justify) their behavior to make it seem acceptable, thus preventing guilt.

Technique	Sample Justifications
Denial of Responsibility	I wasn't in control. It wasn't my fault.
Denial of Injury	It didn't hurt anyone. They won't even notice
Denial of Victim	They/He/She deserved it.
Condemnation of Condemners	The police are corrupt. The stores exploit their customers.
Appeals to Higher Loyalties	I was just following orders. I was doing God's work.

General Strain Theory

▶ Explains that when people experience strain, they may respond with crime in order to alleviate the strain and related emotions.

▶ *Strains* are events and conditions that are disliked.

▶ Strains take two general forms:

  ▶ **Objective strain** is an event or condition that is disliked by most people.

  ▶ **Subjective strain**, is an event or condition that is disliked by the person experiencing it. *This is the stronger predictor of crime.*

▶ Of these two types of strain, there tend to be three forms the strain comes in:

  1. Losing something of value.

  2. Being treated in an adverse or negative way by others.

  3. Not being able to achieve one's goals.

▶ Negative emotions create pressure for corrective action, and crime is one form of corrective action.

General Strain Theory

- Several suggestions for how to limit crimes, including theft:

  - Equipping individuals with the traits and skills to avoid strains conducive to crime.

  - Increasing social support.

  - Increasing social control.

  - Reducing exposure to situations conducive to crime.

- Lastly, through various forms of target hardening you can remove the opportunity for strain to lead to crime in your workplace.

Theft Prevention

▶ Not all internal (employee) theft is preventable.

▶ Making theft so difficult and so much trouble that the would-be thief will decide against it is a reasonable goal for a loss prevention officer.

▶ Preventing theft can save many jobs, and that includes one's own.

▶ Opportunities for employee theft come about because of *waste*, *accident*, *error*, *crime*, and *unethical or unprofessional practices*.

▶ The first letters of these opportunities come together to form the acronym "WAECUP" (pronounced "wake up".)

▶ On the next slide is a list of WAECUP loss threats with examples of each.

WAECUP

Waste

- Protection officers who waste time create opportunity for employees to steal.

- Waste containers are favorite stash places for employees who steal.

- Discarding usable items causes loss, as does deliberately putting them in trash to be stolen later on.

Error

- Protection officers who err in following procedures, such as failing to make an assigned round, create opportunity for undetected theft.

- Other (non-security) employees who fail to follow security-related instructions, such as failing to lock up storage areas or exterior doors, create opportunity for theft.

Unethical/Unprofessional Practices

- A general feeling among employees that it is okay to pilfer (steal) will result in more theft. This is sometimes called the "rolling ball effect." It is similar to the "broken windows" theory.

- Unprofessional practices by management create resentment among other employees, leading to deviant acts like theft.

Accident

- The confusion that surrounds an accident scene may be used to screen employee theft.

- Arson has been used by employees to cover up theft. (What seems to be an accident can actually be a crime.)

- Worker's compensation fraud may occur after an accident where the employee exaggerates the extent of the injury.

Crime

- If protection officers allow employee theft, other employees will get the idea that it is okay to steal and commit other crimes.

- Failure to recognize valuable merchandise allows more crime (protection staff and management will not be watching the correct items).

Employee Dishonesty

Employee dishonesty is theft.

- ▶ It is cheating customers.

- ▶ It is committing industrial espionage.

- ▶ It is lying on employment applications.

- ▶ It is falsifying time records.

- ▶ It is claiming sick leave when there is no sickness.

▶ Anything that can be moved, or taken apart and the pieces moved, is a candidate for employee theft.

▶ Concealment

- ▶ Look for employees parking next to garbage containers. Items are thrown out with the trash.–Todays bags are sturdy and can keep out moisture.

Theft Prevention

▶ Steps to prevention:

1. Learn what can be stolen.

2. Establish a list of what can be stolen.

3. Establish a marking system for organizational property:

    1. Stick on labels

    2. Stamping

    3. Paint

    4. Stencil

4. Eliminate places of concealment

    1. Check/search places of concealment.

Theft Prevention

5. Report all observed suspicious activity.

   ▶ Report in a timely manner.

6. Preventative actions

   ▶ Observe and report

   ▶ Wrongful action can be embarrassing

   ▶ Lead to termination

7. Search of employees and public policy

   ▶ Follow company policy

   ▶ Always ask a supervisor

   ▶ Conduct searches at different times

8. Employee Liaison

   ▶ Morale is a good indicator of theft potential.

   ▶ Use other employees (non-security) for information. A protection officer who has the respect of key employees may receive valuable hints about the deviant activities of employees.

   ▶ A roving protection officer will never know an area or the activities taking place as well as employees who work there.