

Entitled workers are more frustrated on the job and more likely to abuse co-workers

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Employees who feel entitled in the workplace are more apt to be frustrated on the job and lash out at their co-workers, according to new research from the University of New Hampshire.

Conducted by Paul Harvey, assistant professor of management at UNH, the research is presented in the latest issue of the journal *Human Relations* in the article "Frustration-based outcomes of entitlement and the influence of supervisor communication."

Harvey and co-author Kenneth Harris, assistant professor of management at Indiana University Southeast, investigated behavior of workers who feel entitled and how their behavior impacts job-related emotions, such as frustration. The researchers were especially interested in how frustration by entitlement-minded workers can affect other actions, such as abusing co-workers and engaging in [political behavior](#) in the workplace. The researchers also looked at how managers and organizational leaders can mitigate the effects of entitlement through more communication.

Researchers surveyed 223 full-time employees from a variety of organizations. The average age of the sample was 42.8 years and the gender composition was 45 percent male and 55 percent female. Participants reported an average of 10.1 years of tenure at their current employers.

The researchers found that individuals with strong entitlement-driven

self-perceptions can feel more frustrated and dissatisfied with their work lives than employees with a more objective view of their relative worth and their contributions.

"Overall, the frustration experienced by entitled workers appears to stem from perceived inequities in the rewards received by co-workers to whom psychologically entitled employees feel superior," Harvey said.

The entitled employees studied also engaged in abusive workplace behaviors such as insulting, breaking promises and spreading rumors about co-workers in response to job-related frustration. They also were more likely to engage in political behaviors such as ingratiation, self-promotion and doing favors. While such political behaviors often are considered acceptable to draw attention to employees who have earned such recognition, the researchers note that these behaviors also can be used to promote favoritism and influence an inequitable distribution of rewards.

In looking at how to deal with entitled employees, the researchers found that supervisor communication reduced job-related frustration among employees with low levels of entitlement, but increased frustration among psychologically entitled employees.

"Entitled employees are prone to experiencing relatively high levels of job-related frustration. Unfortunately, supervisors who increase communication with such [employees](#) can increase, rather than decrease, employee frustration. This finding gives us some insight about how managers might choose, or in this case not choose, to deal with entitled subordinates," Harvey said.

More information: The full journal article is available for download at hum.sagepub.com/cgi/rapidpdf/0018726710362923v1

Provided by University of New Hampshire

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