

Employees with supportive managers may be less cynical of workplace, but may not feel more loyal to company

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Employees who are cynical of their organization can take a more positive view of their workplace if they have a supportive manager – but it may not make them more loyal to their company, finds a new study by two Toronto university researchers.

Professors Kristyn Scott, Ted Rogers School of Management at Ryerson University, and David Zweig, Department of Management, University of Toronto at Scarborough, were interested in how people view their

organization, and whether that influences job satisfaction and company loyalty—an area that has been not be widely studied.

"Companies invest a great deal in recruiting, training and mentoring their [employees](#)," said Scott, lead author of the study and an associate professor at Ted Rogers School of Business Management. "If employees have a negative view of their company, this may in turn affect their job performance and commitment to their organization, which can be problematic."

The researchers conducted two online surveys to examine workplace cynicism. The first survey was sent to 312 adults employed in a wide array of industries, from real estate and health to government and across different positions (both employee and managerial) in Canada and the U.S. They found that those who were more cynical of their workplace tended to report lower [job satisfaction](#) regardless of the economy.

In the second survey, the researchers examined what effect supportive managers had on employees who were cynical of their organization. This time, 529 adults, who were employed across a wide cross-section of sectors and positions in North America, were asked about their view towards their organization. They were also asked if their supervisor identified career opportunities within the company, provided them opportunities to work on special projects or gave them positive feedback on a regular basis.

The researchers found in the second survey that employees were less cynical of their workplace if they had a supportive supervisor. However, these employees did not feel more loyal to their organization.

"There are a lot of negative downstream effects with cynicism, so it's important for organizations to do what they can in terms of limiting the effects," said Zweig.

Given that cynicism in the workplace is on the rise and unlikely to disappear – especially with factors such as growing income disparity, economic uncertainty and continued austerity measures – employees may increasingly view their organizations as acting out of greed and self-interest.

"Treating employees with respect, offering support and helping them understand the necessity of change within an organization are all the hallmarks of a good supervisor, but it also has the benefit of mitigating the negative effects of cynicism," added Zweig.

However, noted Scott, organizations may benefit from a small dose of cynicism in the workplace. "People who are very cynical can ask the tough questions and examine decisions that their company is making with a critical lens. This kind of feedback may be beneficial for organizations if their own employees are holding them to account for their actions."

Looking towards the future, Scott and Zweig will continue their research on organizational cynicism by exploring whether leaders or employees serve as a catalyst for spreading cynical beliefs within organizations.

More information: Kristyn A. Scott et al. Understanding and mitigating cynicism in the workplace, *Journal of Managerial Psychology* (2016). [DOI: 10.1108/JMP-01-2015-0023](https://doi.org/10.1108/JMP-01-2015-0023)

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