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EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOUR'S DURING LAYOFFS

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Purpose: The purpose of this article is to discuss various issues related to employee behaviour in the context of layoffs in an organization**.** A synthetic review of the literature indicates a gap in articles providing information on employee behaviour in the event of layoffs.
Design/methodology/approach: A systematic review of the literature based on the SCOPUS scientific text database was used. The PRISMA methodology was used to reduce the literature in a way consistent with the subject of the review and the words in the title of the article.
Findings: A systematic review of the literature enabled the creation of a conceptual and bibliographic database related to the topic of employee behaviour in the event of layoffs. Knowledge about employee behaviours not only allows us to build initial hypotheses for further exploration of the research topic but also provides practical potential for practitioners involved in implementing the layoff process in an organisation to plan their actions.
Research limitations/implications: The scarcity of Polish studies and articles on the cultural context of Polish enterprises among the scientific articles analyses in the Scopus database limits the references and practical conclusions to domestic entrepreneurship. The presence of a topic of employee behaviour in publications without citations was excluded from the analysis.
Practical implications: The area of workplace redundancies is identified in the literature as a crisis situation in an organization. The context of a company that implements staff reductions has a negative impact on the perception of the organisation.
Social implications: Important and relevant given the widespread implementation of layoffs and job cuts in an era of technological advances in work processes and the reduction of the human factor in many jobs.
Originality/value: The results of a systematic review of the literature confirm the low level of research interest in the topic of employee behaviour in the context of layoffs. This is confirmed by the limited number of scientific articles on this topic in the Scopus database.
Keywords: management, layoffs, behaviours, employee, review.
Category of the article: Review of the literature.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to explore the topic of employee behaviour in the context of layoffs using a systematic review of the scientific literature in this area. The psychological perspective in management and quality sciences refers to the diverse mental resources of employees in the face of layoffs, understood as a reduction in employment as a process within an organisation. Human adaptation to a change in the threat of jo b loss refers to the concepts of adaptation, mental resilience, and agency in situations of threat (Marlar, 2025). According to resource conservation theory, employees with high adaptability use psychological resilience as a psychological resource and respond positively to change (Luan, Huang, Wen, 2025). Empirical interest in the issue requires a systematic review of the literature in this area. The aspect of differences in employee behaviour towards layoffs is a topical issue, especially in an era when the technologization of work processes is affecting employment. The author points to the importance of employee behaviour towards job cuts, linking the paradigm of individual human resources with the process of change in the organisation, which is job cuts. The results of the article indicate behaviours that are helpful in creating innovative models of adaptation to downsizing. The variables that differentiate employees in their behaviour towards layoffs are a response to tendencies towards certain behaviours in situations of uncertainty.

In order to answer the question of what employee behaviours in the event of layoffs appear in the current perspective of management using the achievements of psychology in social sciences, a systematic review of the literature was used using the SCOPUS database. The article is dedicated to business management professionals who employ people, including human resources specialists and managers involved in offboarding processes, for whom in-depth information about the complexity of employee behaviour towards layoffs in the workplace will allow them to prepare for the demands of this process in their organisation (Wilczyński, 2023).

2. Methods

The following research questions were posed: What behaviours of employees in the event of layoffs in a company are mentioned in the current literature in the field of management and psychology? What publications are available on this topic in the field of management and quality sciences using psychology in the common area of social sciences? The answer to this question is currently available in scientific articles from the Scopus database on research on differences in employee adaptation to layoffs and downsizing. At the same time, this analysis provides recommendations for human resource management practices in organisations that address the issue of individual differences in human adaptation to change, such as layoffs.

In order to answer the research questions, in addition to a critical analysis of specialist texts, elements of a systematic literature review were used. Empirical interest in the area of psychological differences in the adaptation of employees in an organisation in the event of layoffs has become a topical and important topic for the AI technological revolution, which is seen as the cause of job losses and reductions in employment in positions where technological processes are replacing humans. A systematic review of the literature was conducted from 14 to 16 December 2025. Starting with the selection of the area of publications sought from the entire Scopus database to scientific journals from the Scopus list in English, with the selection of the following scientific areas: Business, Management and Accounting, Psychology, Social Sciences, the search area was narrowed down to 12,000 articles in these disciplines. The first stage of the research identified the following keywords: downsizing, employee, behaviour. After searching for this collection of articles using keywords, 143 results were obtained. Using the method of narrowing down the scope of current examples from the literature exclusively in English-language scientific journals from the Scopus list, with the selection of the following fields of science: Business, Management and Accounting, Psychology, Social Sciences, the search area was narrowed down to the field of science, yielding 77 results. In the next step, using the Scopus search engine, the area was narrowed down to the years temporarily valid from 2021 to 2025 in the fields of Business, Management and Accounting, Psychology, and Social Sciences, yielding 14 results. After critical analysis, taking into account the highest citation indices according to SCOPUS, the full texts of the articles with the three highest scores were selected for the next step. The next stage of the research, carried out in accordance with the PRISMA procedure (Hensel, 2020, pp. 73-77), enabled a problem-orientated view of the analysed content from a historical perspective. They became the basis for updating concepts that link the issue of employee behaviour in redundancy situations, present in scientific articles from 2021 to 2025. This criterion is important for current research reports on human behaviour in organizations. Changes in human behaviour in organisations, including the conditions of dismissal, can vary over time and across national contexts. Therefore, in order to ensure the accuracy and relevance of conclusions about behaviour in the dynamics of human behaviour, a time limit was applied to currently relevant behaviour's in organisations.

As a result, the main thematic areas of the publications linking the concepts of employee behavior's in redundancy situations were identified in a network of concepts that includes such terms as knowledge concealment, competition, cyberloafing, withdrawal, cynicism, job insecurity, work control, competition, servant leadership, coping mechanisms, low performance, role stress, anger, and boredom. Translating this set of concepts present in the articles covered by the review into English, the set of concepts collected is hiding knowledge, competition, cyberloafing, withdrawal, behaviours, cynicism, job insecurity, job control, servant leadership, coping mechanism, team performance, role stress, boredom, and anger. A synthetic review using the Scopus database did not identify any Polish authors or

Polish texts on the subject of employee behaviour in the context of layoffs. It was precisely this gap that prompted us to take up this topic. Even if studies on employee behaviour in the context of layoffs in the Polish organisational context were published, they did not appear in the Scopus database and were not cited. Ultimately, the small number of articles confirms the thesis that the topic of employee behaviour in the event of layoffs is largely unexplored, warranting further investigation in national research.

The following is a collection of terms that recur in articles related to employee behavior in the event of layoffs.

Figure 1 illustrates a set of disciplines with a breakdown of the share of articles in each of the disciplines in which topics of employee behaviour appeared in redundancy situations.



Figure 1. Map of terms in English appearing in articles on employee behaviour in layoff situations.

Source: own work.

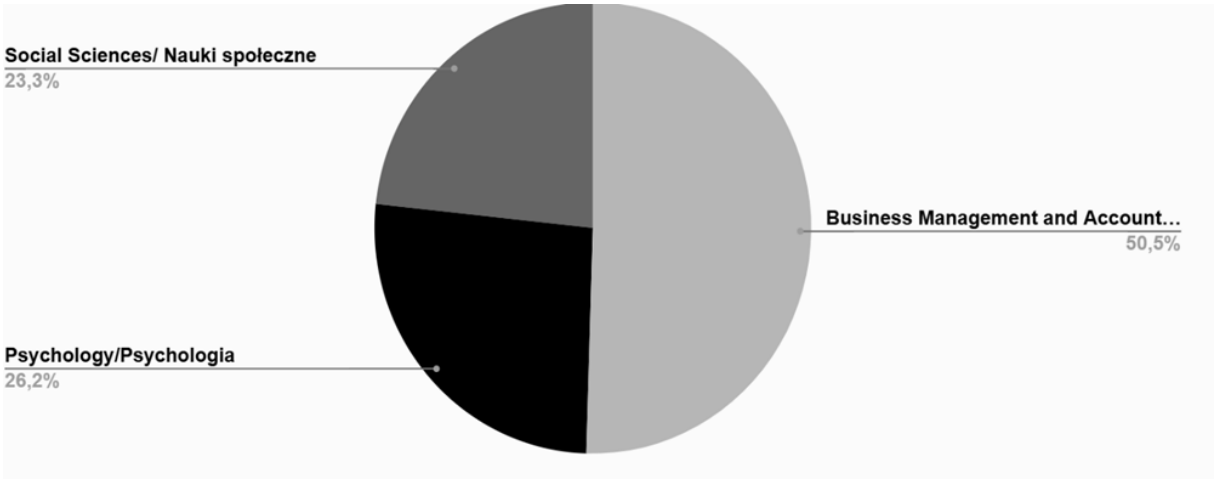

Figure 2. *Percentage breakdown of publications related to employee behaviours in redundancy situations. No time frame N = 77.*

Source: own study based on results from the Scopus database.

Table 1 summarises the key behaviours present in the scientific literature articles analysed in this synthetic review.

Table 1.
Texts selected for full analysis from the Scopus database, considering the highest citation index

Article		Year	Citation	Employee Behaviour	Related words
1	Nguyen, Tuyet-Mai, Malik Ashish, Budhwar, Pawan Knowledge hiding in organisational crisis: The moderating role of leadership, *Journal of Business Research*	2022	158	Low job engagement Unwillingness to share knowledge with others; Knowledge hiding	Role conflict Job insecurity Job control Cynicism Competition
2	Khawaja, K.F., Sarfraz, M., Rashid, M., Rashid, M. How is COVID-19 pandemic causing employee withdrawal behavior in the hospitality industry? An empirical investigation, *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights*	2022	72	Cyberloafing Withdrawal behaviours	Job stress Increased levels of boredom and anger
3	Tian, Z., Tang, C., Akram, F., Khan, M.L., Chuadhry, M.A. Negative Work Attitudes and Task Performance: Mediating Role of Knowledge Hiding and Moderating Role of Servant Leadership, *Frontiers in Psychology*	2021	21	Knowledge hiding behaviours Servant leadership	Knowledge Hiding behaviour Role stress Job Insecurity Employees Cynicism Team performance
4	Salman, A., Ahmed, I., Jahangir, S., Job insecurity and employees' safety voice behaviour – a managerial dilemma caused by COVID-19, Asia-Pacific Journal of Business Administration	2022	8	Context of the situation in the organization of layoffs COVID-19	Job insecurity and Employees' safety voice behaviour – a managerial dilemma caused by COVID-19
5	Baù, M., Karlsson, J., Haag, K., Pittino, D., Chirico, F. Employee layoffs in times of crisis: do family firms differ? *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*	2024	5	Context of the situation in the organization	Trust in the organization Family business Control in a crisis situation
6	Bellmann,L., Bellmann, L., Hübler, O. Labour mobility, short-time work and working from home: establishments' behaviour during the COVID-19 crisis, *International Journal of Manpower*	2024	3	Context of COVID-19, layoffs	short-time work (STW) working from home (WFH) Reducing fluctuation workers
7	Chenxin, X., Dezhu, Y., Xian, Y. Corporate competition and culture stock price crash risk, *Journal of Industrial Engineering and Engineering Management*	2022	4		Corporate competition culture and stock price crash risk

Source: own work.

Table 2.
Articles presented in the results of the synthetic literature review are excluded from the analysis due to low citation counts

No	Author	Title	Year	Source	Citation
1	Ferrary, M.	The salient stakeholders of industrial downsizing: the contribution of boundary object and systemic shock	2024	Strategy and Leadership, 53(2), pp. 105-131	0
2	Sharieff, Mohamed Habibulla Rawat, Garima Tak, Trapti	Understanding Adaptability and Psychological Well-Being as Protective Factors for Job Retention during the Covid-19 Crisis	2023	Journal for ReAttach Therapy and Developmental Diversities, 6(7), pp. 150-160	0
3	Pai, Chih-Hung; Wang, Yu-Lan Shang, Yunfeng Hsu, Ta-Kuang	A Study on Multimedia Integrated Pre-service Education to Learning Behavior and Competitiveness in Workplace of Employees in Hospitality	2022	Frontiers in Psychology, 13, 817960	0

Source: own work based on Scopus.

3. Conclusions

A systematic review of the literature allowed us to explore the topic of employee behaviour in the context of redundancies. Knowledge retention and cynical avoidance of knowledge sharing for fear of other employees' competitiveness are indicators of withdrawal from work in favour of reducing work efficiency (Tian, 2021). Furthermore, cyber slacking, in which boredom and anger manifest themselves in phone browsing and private online activity, is also an indicator of withdrawal from work (Khawaja, 2022). The set of concepts and recurring behaviours allow for the development of diverse adaptive resources for employees in the event of redundancies. Employee behaviours include both those that negatively affect work performance and good practices that indicate helpful behaviours on the part of managers in situations involving employee redundancies (Salman, 2022). In the area of positive behaviours, the literature refers to the importance of servant leadership (Tian, 2021). This is a management style that supports employees in crisis situations, such as workplace redundancies. Servant leadership behaviour is understood as reducing the culture of knowledge concealment in an organisation, motivating towards common goals, and developing and promoting knowledge-sharing behaviours. Servant leadership behaviour reduces the culture of knowledge concealment in an organisation by promoting stability (Bilal et al., 2020). Servant leadership motivates employees to achieve common goals, rewards them for their contribution to the organisation, and promotes a positive attitude towards knowledge-based behaviours to reduce stress, cynicism, and job insecurity in the workplace (Franco, Antunes, 2020).

A crisis in an organization, as a context, also becomes an element of trust and responsibility in the relationship between employees and the employer. In situations of uncertainty and layoffs, trust becomes a factor for jointly seeking solutions (Baù, 2024). Where the security needs of both the employee and the employer meet with concessions from each side to build alternative solutions to layoffs: shared positions, divided roles, reduced working hours (Bellmann, 2024).

4. Results

The cited literature indicates that the current research output in the Scopus database leaves a gap to be filled in the topic of employee behavior in layoff situations. Although the cited literature points to a set of recurring behaviours, the clear deficiency does not allow for broad differentiation based on the type of organization, industry, or occupational groups of employees. Using differences in employee behavior between sectors, it is worth citing British research**.** When looking for psychological reactions of employees during restructuring and downsizing, one can refer to research in the public sector, conducted by a British public sector organisation (Edwards, Clinton, 2023). In this sector, the general behaviour of employees in the paradigm of individual employee resources was divided into flourishing individuals, individuals regaining balance, and ambivalent individuals. The study was conducted shortly before the restructuring and downsizing, during these processes, and after their completion. The surveys were collected from employees in three longitudinal waves (time 1 N = 253; time 2 N = 107; time 3 N = 93, at intervals of 12 months). Based on the level and changes in anxiety, commitment to the organisation, and commitment to work, three classes of responses were identified: a positive profile of developing individuals and two relatively negative response profiles, defined as individuals regaining balance and ambivalent individuals. A higher level of control over work determined membership in the more positive response profile, while a higher level of structural uncertainty predicted membership in the group with the most negative responses. (Edwards, Clinton, 2023). Using a person-centred approach, the authors point to different types of employee responses to redundancy. Furthermore, the findings help explain why groups of employees may exhibit specific patterns of psychological responses to redundancies. This approach therefore provides researchers and managers with a better understanding of the diverse impact of redundancies, restructuring, and downsizing on employees within the paradigm of individualised adaptation to change. In terms of factors related to the situation in which the organization found itself, it is important to point out crisis situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the course of which implied processes requiring job cuts (Bellmann, 2024). The situational context of layoffs in the available literature has clearly increased its share in the description of the issue of layoffs in relation to

the global COVID-19 pandemic from years 2020-2022, which dominated the context of the publication in terms of layoffs.

5. Discussion

A systematic review of the literature as a method for formulating research questions is a supportive activity for researchers seeking answers to questions that initiate work on employee behaviour in redundancy situations. One may ask to what extent the presented picture of employee behaviour in the event of layoffs is limited to selected analysis criteria. The source itself, which is the Scopus database, is not the only collection of publications from the total scientific output, but it does contain a citation index. In addition, the variables selected for the analysis of articles on employee behaviour in the event of layoffs are only a snapshot of the topic of employee behaviour in the event of layoffs. Furthermore, the variables selected for the analysis of articles on employee behaviour in the event of layoffs represent a snapshot of the topic of employee behaviour in the event of layoffs. However, the citation index of these articles indicates their scientific and research usefulness in understanding this phenomenon. Therefore, the literature review organizes knowledge about employee behaviour in redundancy situations, which is current and useful in business practice, where redundancies are a change that requires decisions to be made about how to manage this process. The decidedly low participation of Polish scientific articles in the Scopus database thematically related to employee behavior in the situation of workplace layoffs indicates that the research gap in this area constitutes a significant justification for conducting studies in this field. Moreover, the specificity of the organization, the industry, and the characteristics of employees are certainly a range of variables that constitute a key area for deepening exploratory research in terms of internationally comparative conclusions regarding the behavior of contemporary employees in the situation of layoffs.

6. Summary

The PRISMA methodology allows for an overview of published resources and the categorisation of concepts related to the topic. The answer to the question of what employee behaviour in the event of redundancies in a company is evoked by the current literature in the field of management and psychology is presented in the collected names of behaviours in Table 1. In the further part of the work, a graphic is presented with related concepts from the field of research in the publication resources of the Scopus database. A review of the subject of

employee behaviour in the event of redundancies in the field of management and quality sciences, using psychology in the common area of social sciences, has allowed us to build behavioural profiles based on the withdrawal of employees from work processes in which uncertainty, stress, anger, and boredom manifest themselves in behaviours such as knowledge concealment and cyber slacking. The most important empirical indicators of employee behaviour in redundancy situations confirm that the dominant behaviour is withdrawal, which manifests itself in the concealment and retention of knowledge. Employees are uncertain about their job security, so they retain knowledge to maintain a competitive advantage (Tian et al., 2022). The area of uncertainty with respect to the situation in the organization becomes an important organisational context (Salman, 2022). Hiding knowledge in such contexts can be seen as selfish and cynical behaviour on the part of employees to avoid the negative effects of sharing resources, especially in times of crisis, as employees tend to withhold resources that are at risk. Poor organisational performance leading to layoffs is a major cause of employee cynicism, stress, and job insecurity (Nguyen et al., 2022). Cyberloafing, also known as cyberslacking, refers to employees performing non-work-related activities, which is a behaviour that emphasises withdrawal from engagement in work processes. Organisational crises related to job cuts can cause long-term employee role conflicts, job insecurity, and cynicism in behaviours such as knowledge hoarding (Nguyen et al., 2022). Job insecurity slows down creativity and organisational development, leading to a loss of opportunities, a lack of cooperation between employees, and non-compliance with work standards (Tian et al., 2022).

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