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The Phenomenon of Crab Mentality Among Employees in Bandung City in Self-Development Process

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Abstract - The process of self-development is an essential component of an employee's self growth. However, the phenomenon of crab mentality can hinder this process, particularly in competitive work environments. Crab mentality refers to an attitude or behavior where individuals or groups tend to restrain the advancement of others due to envy or an inability to accept the success of others. This study aims to describe how the individual, societal, and organizational factors of crab mentality in employees in the self-development process. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with a purposive sampling technique in selecting informants. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews with employees who have suffered from crab mentality. The findings of this study reveal that the phenomenon of crab mentality in the workplace emerges due to three antecedent factors. Individual Factors that capturing affective aspects such as insecurity and sociogenesis motives, Societal Factors which deal with relationships, roles, and the work atmosphere, and Organizational Factors including the role of leadership, corporate culture, and company dynamics. This research makes a significant contribution to the field of communication science, particularly in the areas of communication psychology and organizational communication.

Keywords: Crab Mentality; Organization; Employee; Psychology; Self-Development Process

Introduction

Crab mentality refers to the behavior of a number of crabs in a bucket trying to find freedom. The crabs pull on each other and prevent anyone from getting free from the bucket. This metaphor when adapted to humans, refers to a form of individual mentality that seeks to "pull" others away from reaching the pinnacle of their success. They block the success of others due to the fear that others' success will reduce their own chances of success. Crab mentality is basically the thought of "If I can't have something, then you shouldn't either" mixed with some jealousy or resentment in their self. Crab mentality is a pattern of behavior in which a person tries to put down others who have better achievements than them (Aydın and Oguzhan, 2019).

This crab mentality phenomenon can occur in a variety of social contexts, and even more in competitive work environments. In such competitive work situations, employees often feel the need to prove themselves and compete with their peers. It is undeniable that competition will always occur in the workplace, but if this pressure becomes overly high, individuals can feel threatened by the success of others and can trigger the emergence of crab mentality. They will try to undermine their rivals by

blocking their rivals' success, distorting their rivals' success negatively, or distorting their own achievements positively. Job competition itself can be said to be a two-edged knife for employees. On the one side, job competition can certainly be stressful and cause employees to feel insecure at work. But on the other side, job competition can motivate employees to develop themselves through improving their skills, education, and work experience in order to survive in high job competition.

The phenomenon of crab mentality can certainly be a barrier to employees in the process of developing themselves. In the context of self-development in employees, crab mentality can also have an impact on employee motivation and passion. It was stated in a previous study by Aydin & Oguzhan (2019) that crab mentality fosters a culture of jealousy and competition, which leads to decreased motivation among employees.

Some examples about how crab mentality exist especially in the workplace setting that informants in this research have experienced are; gossiping and spreading rumors about colleagues, taking credits for colleagues' work, sabotaging colleagues' work, jealous of a colleague that potentially getting a promotion, and many more. It is shown that crab mentality can be manifested in many form which mainly involve bringing others dowm for getting their own benefit.

This research had six informants who were chosen from different institutions (private and government institution). They have different ages, gender, job positions, and years of experience so this will show different points of view on the topic. This research aims to discuss what is important in understanding the crab mentality phenomenon that emerges among these employees, especially in Bandung City.

The process of employee self-development and the crab mentality phenomenon are closely related to communication, especially in the context of communication psychology, intrapersonal communication, and organizational communication. This research focuses on crab mentality-related aspects through the antecedent factors. Those factors are also used by Carliss D. Miller (2019) to studied this topic The study looked at the idea of "crab mentality" by focusing mostly on minority workers based on their race. It is similar to the findings of this study, which also showed how crab mentality exists in organization. However, this study specifically looks at crab mentality among employees at different companies and in different job roles.

Theoretical Framework

Communication is the expression of thoughts, ideas, desires, and means of knowing and understanding between humans (Diwyarthi et al., 2023). Based on this, communication process can be interpreted based on the psychological aspects of communicators and communicants (disclosure of thoughts, ideas, and desires) to get feedback and create a mutual understanding. The goal of communication is to build relationships between communicators and communicants in order to understand each other so that they can make changes in opinions or behavior according to the feedback given.

Communication in organizations is a set of understandings that combines organizational members from top to bottom (Athoillah, 2010). Organizational communication is the process of creating and exchanging messages along with the symbolic meaning in an organization that involves individuals in it to create an understanding. Organizational communication is the process of interpreting messages by considering the functional structure, the dynamics of interaction between members, the environment, and the cultural norms as well as values of the organization.

Crab mentality is a phenomenon characterized by negative reactions to the progress of others that can manifest in the form of negative thoughts, statements, or actions (Shatz, 2023). Crab mentality is where a person tries to put down other people who have better achievements than them (Aydin & Oğuzhan, 2019). The antecedent factors of crab mentality, which are also an area of focus in this study, can be grouped into three, which are individual factors, societal factors, and organizational factors. Individual factors suggests that this factor includes emotional and personality aspects in a person who has a crab mentality (Miller, 2019). Societal factors include the interactions between individuals and each other and where they are together (Hilbrecht et al., 2020). Organizational factors include in-group dynamics, inter-group competition, and overall organizational culture (Aydin & Oguzhan, 2019).

Self-development is the process of improving oneself to reach the maximum potential of oneself through positive habits in order to improve the quality of life. The three dimensions in the

self-development process are the personal dimension that related to experiences throughout life, the social dimension that related to the surrounding environment, and the spiritual dimension that related to one's faith or leads to the soul. Self-development can be said to be a process because there are stages in it, as for these stages, among others: (1) Knowledge Stage, talks about how individuals know who they are; (2) Desire Stage, talks about what the individual wants to achieve; (3) Skills Stage, talks about the abilities or competencies possessed and mastered by a person to achieve their personal goals and professional goals; (4) Optimism Stage, talks about the positive mindset that contributes to the way individuals achieve goals, overcome challenges, and develop themselves; (5) Action Stage, talks about how individuals take action or make efforts to turn their desires into reality; (6) Reinforcement Stage, talks about how individuals evaluate and ensure that the actions taken will continue and become a habit, thus playing an important role in achieving consistent progress in self-development.

Hasibuan (2020) states that employees are people who sell services (mind or energy) and receive compensation, the amount of which has been determined in advance. Based on this statement, it can be said that employees are people who are able to sell their minds and energy with salary compensation to carry out the operations of a company where they work. The term "employee" refers to an individual who engages in work in exchange for financial compensation from the entity for which they are employed. These individuals are capable of generating output that aligns with the objectives and requirements of their respective organizations. There are several types of employee status in the world of work, consisting of full-time employees, contract employees, part-time employees, freelance workers, on-call employees, and volunteers.

Employee motivation and ability are the most important aspects of employee performance. Motivation includes inner drive and ability includes aspects of knowledge, expertise, and skills possessed by employees in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. Motivation is what makes someone want to take action, achieve goals, and keep going when things get tough. It includes both intrinsic motivation like personal satisfaction, purpose, and passion for the job also extrinsic motivation, which might include salary, recognition, promotion, or other external rewards.

Based on research titled 'Exploring the Crabs in the Barrel Syndrome in Organizations' conducted by Miller (2019), this research has determined 3 sub-focuses that will be discussed. The following is an explanation of each sub-focus that will be examined in this study:

Individual Factors. In discussing this factor, researchers will focus on the emotional aspects or affective components of the Crab Mentality Phenomenon among Employees in Bandung City.

Social Factors (Societal). In discussing this factor, researchers will focus on the social aspects of the Crab Mentality Phenomenon among Employees in Bandung City.

Organizational Factors (Organizational). In discussing this factor, researchers focus on examining organizational-related elements of the Crab Mentality Phenomenon among employees in the companies where they work.

This study will examine how it plays a role in the self-development process of employees in Bandung City as victims or targets of individuals with crab mentality. This includes discussion related to the stages of self-development in a person, namely the stages of knowledge, desire, skills, optimism, action, and reinforcement.

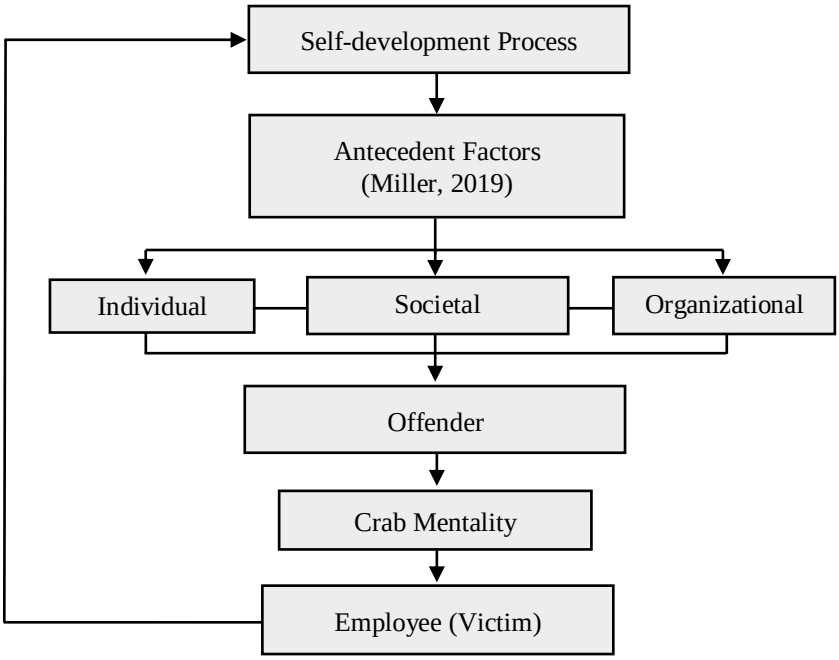


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework
Source: Author

Material and Methodology

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative method. A qualitative research approach is suitable when the aim is to create an explanation of a phenomenon to gain understanding. Qualitative methods give informants the freedom to express themselves in an actual way. This qualitative method is very helpful in cases where the phenomenon under study is not directly "observable" and the only method of study is to ask participants about their experience. This research focuses on getting an overview of the crab mentality phenomenon with more flexibility.

Data collection techniques in this research were conducted using literature studies through books, research journals, and websites. In addition, field studies were also conducted through in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation. The data validity tests carried out were triangulation, member-check, and increased persistence. The data analysis technique used was data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Informants in this study were determined using purposive sampling technique. There are six key informants as employees as well as victims of crab mentality and two supporting informants as HRD and psychologist.

Table 1. Key Informants

No	Name	Gender	Age	Job Title	Work Period	Institution
1	RHI	Male	45	Project Manager	6 Years	State-Owned Company
2	ES	Female	47	Strore Accountant	25 Years	Educational Institution
3	FAR	Male	23	Admin Staff	1 Year	Private Company
4	H	Female	46	Trainer	19 Years	Private Company
5	HK	Female	53	Civil Servant	21 Years	Government Institution
6	FRR	Female	32	Government Staff	3 Years	Government Institution

Source: Author

Table 2. Supporting Informants

No	Name	Age	Information
1	Helni	49	HRD
2	Gita	22	Psychologist

Source: Author

Result and Discussion

Individual Factors

Three out of six informants stated that people with crab mentality are insecure. The insecurity of people with crab mentality is reflected in their actions at work. One of these actions is when people with crab mentality avoid talking about achievements. In addition, there are those who show it by making negative comments that seem to degrade themselves. They also tend to compare themselves to their coworkers and when these comparisons result in feelings of lack of confidence, they respond in ways that try to hinder the development of others rather than focus on improving themselves. The crab mentality that exists in a person is the result of feeling insecure about the conditions they are experiencing.

The analysis also shown that other individual factors are attention-seeking and dissatisfaction with the status quo. Informant FAR, HK, and RHI stated that their coworkers with this crab mentality can do this on the basis of wanting to seek attention and feeling dissatisfied with what they have. In relation to that, people with crab mentality want to seek attention because they are not confident about what they already have. The attention sought by people with crab mentality includes discussions related to the need for recognition, the desire to be loved, and not wanting to be ignored.

Based on the theory of human behavior in communication psychology, this is the sociogenesis motive of people who have crab mentality. The sociogenetic motives reflected in the behavior of people with crab mentality are competence motive, love motive, and self-esteem motive. Competence motive includes the need to prove that one has ability or competence. The love motive includes the need to be loved in the form of recognition and appreciation. The self-esteem motive includes the need to be able to exist. This shows that the phenomenon of crab mentality does not only include a sense of envy or competition, but there is also a discussion about fulfilling one's psychological needs.

The competence motive of people with crab mentality is in line with the Maslow's theory, which places a sense of security as one of the basic human needs. The need for achievement is defined as a preference for excellence in accomplishment through individual effort (McClelland in Rybnicek, et al., 2019). In the context of crab mentality, people who cannot achieve what they want seem to want to get a sense of security through behavior that is destructive or harmful to others.

The love motive among people with crab mentality is reflected in them seeking validation for their feelings and efforts from people in their work environment. They do this by putting down or belittling others, implying that they also want to be appreciated for their efforts. This motive is closely related to the rewards given by the company. Rybnicek et al (2019) state that motivation at work is the result of the relationship between employee needs and rewards from the company. Previous research by Renger (2019) states that positive recognition in the workplace, such as appreciation, respect, and attention, can improve overall employee well-being.

The self-esteem motive can be referred to as the affiliation motive, which in this study discusses people with crab mentality who want to always be considered in the work environment. The affiliation motive in the work environment refers to the need to maintain personal relationships with superiors and coworkers. Based on the explanation above, the results of this study show that the phenomenon of crab mentality does not only include envy or competition, but there is also a discussion about fulfilling one's psychological needs. In the context of the crab mentality phenomenon, these needs are not met, so individuals seek ways to fulfill them through harmful behavior.

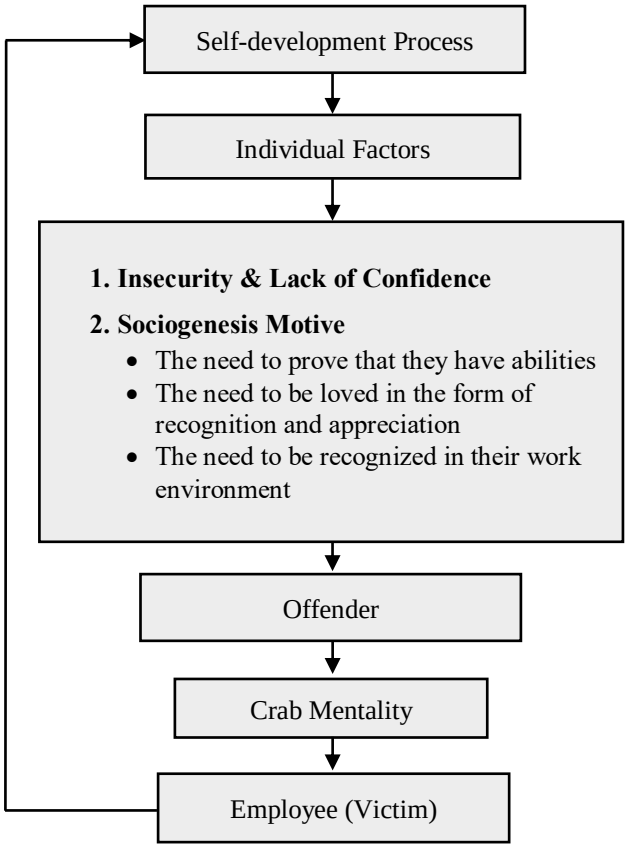


Figure 2. Individual Factors Model
Source: Author

Societal Factors

Relationship with Coworkers. Most informants stated that their relationship with coworkers is limited to coworkers. This coworker relationship is a formality relationship that only talks about work professionally without interfering in personal matters. In accordance with the observations that have been made where during breaks such as lunch, many employees are silent at their respective work desks and do different activities. There was little interaction, either with informants or between other employees.

This research found that this working relationship can be both a result and a factor of the crab mentality phenomenon. The results of the analysis found that the working relationships that occur between informants and coworkers in the midst of the crab mentality phenomenon tend to be professional relationships. Working relationships that emphasize only work matters without any emotional ties or trust, tend to make employees see their colleagues as competitors who must be defeated, not as people who can be used as friends to grow together. This means that the relationship is a factor in crab mentality.

Role at Work. Two out of six informants have a position as a team leader in their workplace. Their overall role is the same, namely making decisions, giving directions, and evaluating. Three other informants have positions as team members in their workplaces. The roles of these three informants are largely the same, namely coordinating with other parties and also helping the company's operations by preparing more detailed plans.

Workplace Atmosphere. A total of three out of six informants stated that the work atmosphere they felt was an atmosphere with little support among fellow employees. Apart from lack of support, the working conditions or atmosphere felt by informants is an atmosphere that is less agile in doing work. Two of the six informants stated that sometimes their coworkers did not take their work seriously. Then most informants also revealed that their work environment is an inefficient environment, this includes a lack of communication effectiveness and the ability of team members to complete work. An unproductive atmosphere can also be categorized as a factor of crab mentality.

The crab mentality phenomenon is prevalent in work environments where employees feel irresponsible and not fully committed to the group's work. People with crab mentality are described as people who want maximum results, but do not want to put in too much effort. This is supported by theory A in Aithal and Kumar's (2016) research which states that unproductive people are people who ignore responsibility, commitment, consistency, and target fulfillment. In addition, this indicates that an unsupportive work atmosphere also occurs in the informant's workplace as a victim of the crab mentality.

It was found that there is a circular pattern between employee relationships or closeness and the crab mentality phenomenon. The quality of this working relationship can be both a result and a factor of the crab mentality phenomenon. The results of the analysis found that the working relationship that occurs between informants and coworkers in the midst of the crab mentality phenomenon tends to be a professional relationship. The work roles carried out by people with crab mentality tend to be related to the position as a team member. However, it does not rule out the possibility that even in the position of leader and freelancer, the phenomenon of crab mentality still occurs. This shows that crab mentality occurs in various positions or work roles.

As for the work atmosphere, an inefficient atmosphere is most common amidst the crab mentality phenomenon. The crab mentality phenomenon is also prevalent in work environments where employees are irresponsible and not fully committed to the group's work. A work-life balance environment can also lead to employees spending too much time and energy on work, leaving them with less time for recuperation, social connections, or activities that provide personal fulfillment and ultimately lead to crab mentality in the workplace.

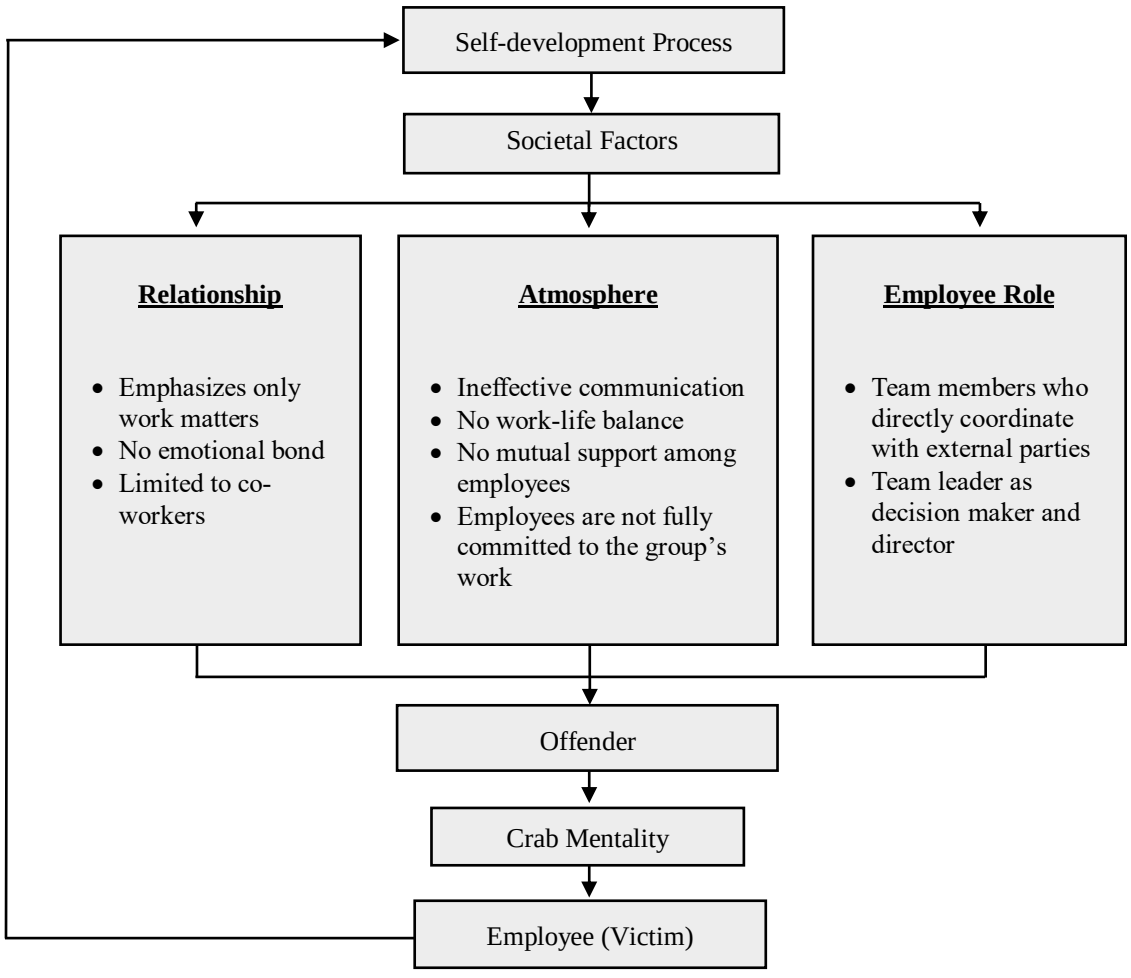


Figure 3. Societal Factors Model
Source: Author

Organizational Factors

Leadership Style. Five out of six informants said that their leaders rarely guide them regarding work. Their leaders choose to encourage informants to be independent by not directing work in detail to informants. However, their leaders show a fair amount of concern for them. Based on situational leadership theory, this shows that leaders with a supporting type appear more often in the midst of the crab mentality phenomenon among employees.

This supports previous research results from Miller (2019) that leaders who cannot direct employees to develop their careers are often found in environments with crab mentality. Although according to STL (situational leadership) theory a good leader is a leader who is situational, based on the analysis conducted, little directive or guidance from the leader can be a factor of crab mentality. What needs to be noted is that the leader's attitude towards their subordinates is indicated to be subjective. This means that the leader's attitude can differ from one employee to another.

Company Culture. The majority of informants considered that the place where they work is a results-oriented company. This culture requires informants to deliver final results as quickly and as well as possible in accordance with applicable standards. However, there were also informants who described their company as being oriented towards the ability to think creatively and innovatively. This indicates that crab mentality is most likely to occur in companies with a market culture. Market culture from the Competing Values Framework (CVF) model is a competitive culture that is oriented towards external parties and stability also emphasizes competitiveness, results and goal achievement (Aleksić et al., 2019).

Still based on the same theory, the analysis also found that adhocracy culture and hierarchy culture also play a role in the emergence of the crab mentality phenomenon in the workplace. The adhocracy culture is characterized by flexibility and encourages innovation and entrepreneurship from employees. Hierarchy culture is internally oriented and characterized by certainty, routine, and structured supervision.

Company Dynamics. The dynamics within the company significantly influence both work pressure and HR management, shaping employees' overall experience in the workplace. High work demands, coupled with tight deadlines and limited flexibility, often push employees to bring their work home, highlighting inefficiencies in workload distribution and time management. Based on Henri Fayol's theory of organizational communication, which emphasizes fundamental principles of management, companies must pay close attention to several key aspects to ensure a healthy and effective organizational culture. Which two of them are including the reward system and overall organizational attitudes These, when embedded into the organizational culture, promote respect, collaboration, and a shared sense of purpose will help to reduce the opportunity of toxic behaviors in workplace.

Work Pressure. The work pressure felt by informants in general is great pressure. The results of observations made by researchers also show that informants often bring their work home on the grounds that they need to catch up on deadlines so they don't want to work overtime at the office or where they work. The enormity of this work pressure indicates the need for strong motivation and mentality so as to suppress the emergence of the crab mentality phenomenon in the work environment. This behavior indicates an imbalance between workload and available work hours, which can ultimately lead to stress, burnout, and a crab mentality.

HR Management. Another dynamic that often occurs in companies or work environments with the crab mentality phenomenon is the company's low ability to manage employee welfare. Four out of six informants admitted that the company should improve several aspects of HR management. In particular, they highlighted the need for a more structured and transparent recruitment process to ensure fair hiring practices and appropriate workload distribution.

They also raised concerns about the company's reward and punishment system, emphasizing the importance of a fair and merit-based approach that motivates rather than discourages employees. However, the other two informants claimed that the company's ability to manage HR was good enough. This is because the workforce is sufficient and the HR managed is small so that it can be maximized.

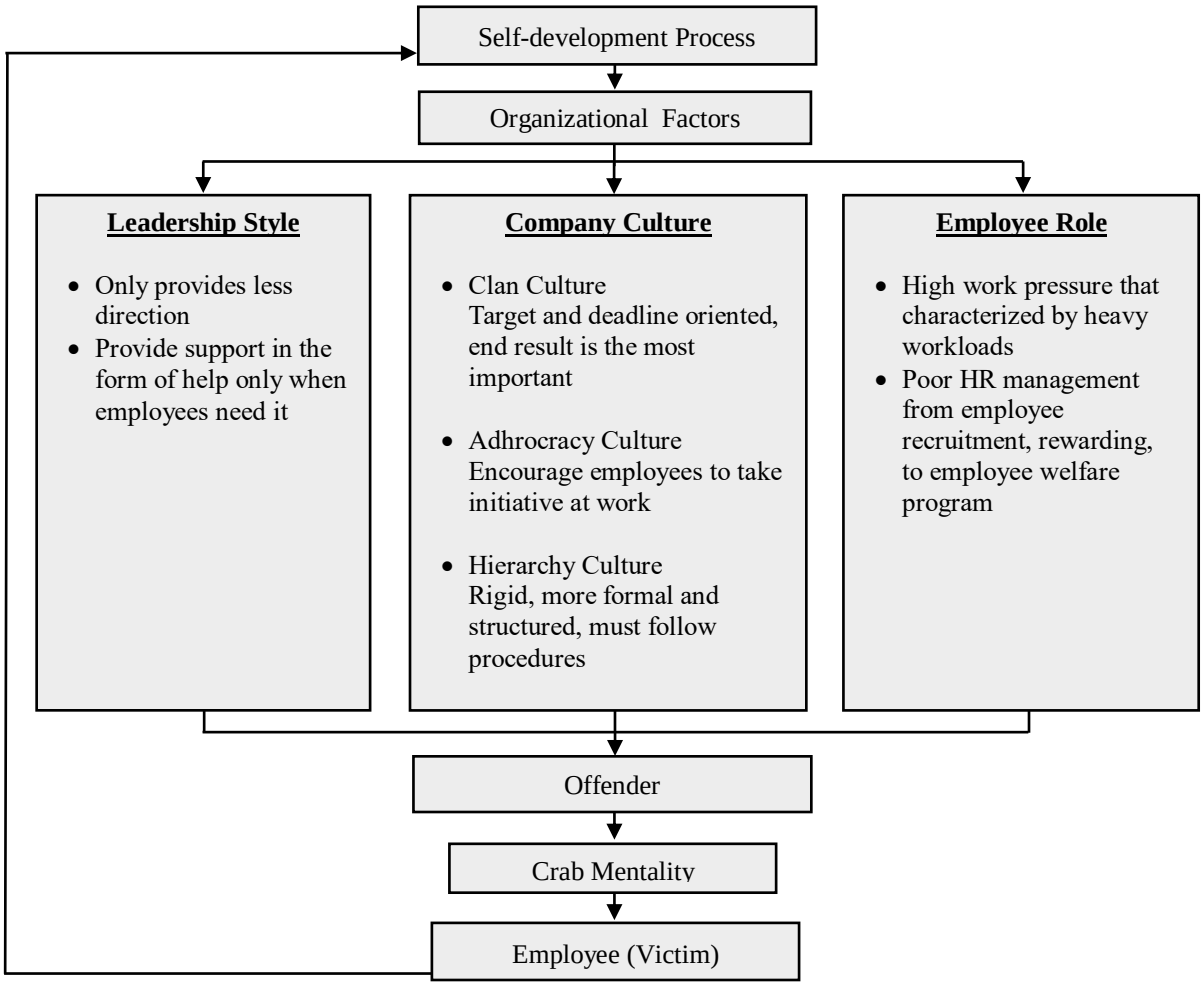


Figure 3. Societal Factors Model
Source: Author

The Phenomenon of Crab Mentality in the Self-Development Process

The results of the analysis show that organizational factors are the most important factors of the crab mentality phenomenon in employees. Organizational factors become a kind of 'pillar' that determines how societal factors and individual factors play a role. Regarding self-development, the crab mentality phenomenon began to hinder the self-development process at the skills stage of some informants. Some employees refrained from developing their skills because they felt it would be futile. They choose to focus on their existing work, following what is directed.

However, all informants stated that they did not experience demotivation due to the crab mentality phenomenon so the majority of them continued to work where they work now. This shows that all informants are at the desire stage in the self-development process. They have strong motivation to survive the crab mentality phenomenon even though they know that it hinders their self-development.

The interesting thing about this research finding is that there is one informant who actually chose to leave the workplace with the crab mentality phenomenon. However, he did so on the basis of his motivation to have a good career in a good place. This shows that he is at the action stage in the self-development process. He knows very well that working in such a place will not make him develop.

This crab mentality phenomenon began to hinder the self-development process at the skills stage of some informants. Some employees hold back from developing their skills because they feel it would be useless. They choose to focus on the job at hand, following what is directed. When people want to develop skills at work, they definitely need support from their coworkers. However, with the

crab mentality, coworkers can make people feel like they don't want to develop because they are always put down or underestimated.

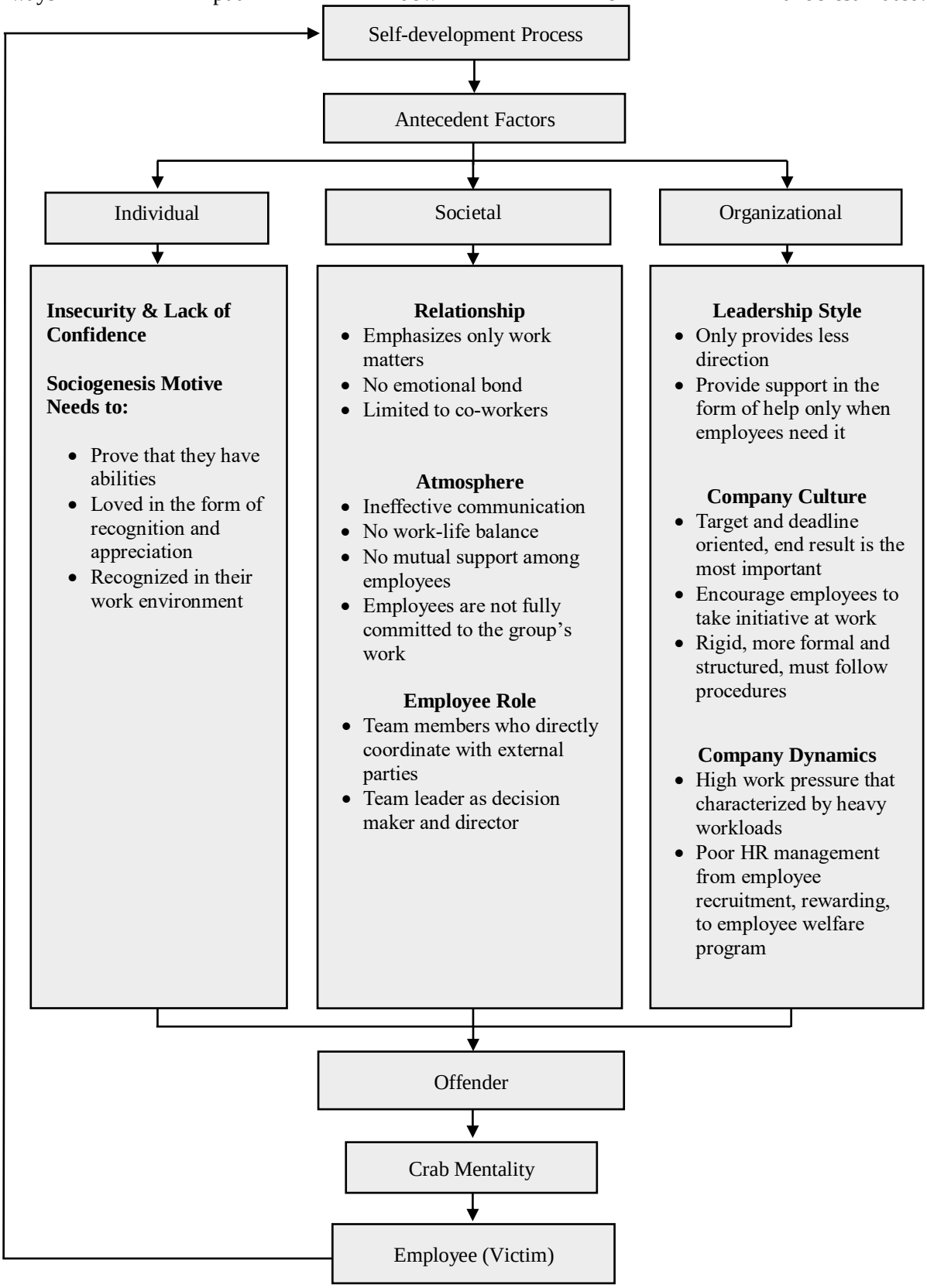


Figure 5. Crab Mentality in Self-development Process in Employee Model
Source: Author

Conclusions

The three factors discussed in this research are interrelated in determining how crab mentality can hinder an individual's self-development process. Self-development relies heavily on social support, appreciation, and environments and places that encourage growth. Organizational factor is the main factor that also determines how societal and individual factors play a role in the emergence of the crab mentality phenomenon.

Employees must be able to take the initiative to develop skills and seek new opportunities and improve emotional intelligence and mental resilience to deal with the pressures of the work environment. Companies must be able to provide leadership training, provide self-development programs for employees, and implement an evaluation and reward system for employee performance. Future researchers are expected to consider other research methods such as phenomenological studies, case studies, and quantitative approaches. Discussions related to the factors of crab mentality are also expected to be carried out through the point of view of the offender or people with crab mentality.

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