Research article

THE CAUSES AND IMPART OF DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR IN THE WORK PLACE:

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ABSTRACT

While management in most organizations have shown no interest in managing deviant behaviour as they view it as destructive, research has shown that minor deviant behaviors may extend to high profile scandals that have a negative impact on organizations hence the importance of managing deviant behaviour at workplace. Two universities in Nigeria were made use of and due to confidentiality they will be referred to as University A and University B. The research sought to establish the prevalence of production, property and personal deviance at the workplace and the impact they have on organizational performance. Stratified random sampling was employed to come up with a sample size of 60 respondents with 8 being the immediate bosses (management) and the rest were the secretaries. Robnson and Bennets' typology of workplace deviance was used and speculated that the factors contributing to workplace deviance range from interpersonal factors, organizational justice and work place environment. Findings revealed that indeed workplace deviance through its various forms was overt in the universities. The two most common are production and property deviance through leaving early or coming to work, misuse of company property ,use of stationery on personal matters and verbal abuse were common judging from the response. The research concluded that workplace deviance is not a phenomenon to be underestimated as it impacts negatively on both the organization total output and the individual employee's moral and motivation. The research recommended that management should be involved and set the tone in supporting ethics programmes to improve organizational culture and conduct of employees in the workplace.   **Copyright © AJSSAL, all rights reserved.**

Keywords: interpersonal deviance, organizational justice, conducive working environment, production deviance, property deviance.
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INTRODUCTION

Workplace deviance has seen growing interest among researchers like Greenbag (2002), Griffein and 0' Leary-Kelly (2004) and practioneers in recent years. Bolin and Heatherly (2001) defined work place deviance as a voluntary

behaviour that violates institutionalized norms and in so doing threatens the well- being of employees and the organization itself.

Aremu & Adeyogu (2003) have established that all individuals who are at work have the potential of carrying out this destructive behaviour. Rahman 2008, Gillian 1996 quoted in Mazni & Rosiah (2011) however concluded that workplace deviance is more prevalent among the support staff as it is believed that employees with lower status are more prone to exhibit deviant behaviour as they can commit their free time to 'spite back' to whoever would have wronged them. While management in most organizations have shown no interest in implementing the findings of research on deviant behaviour as they view it as destructive, Mazni & Roziah (2011) alludes that it is these minor deviant behaviours by support staff that extends to high profile scandals like that we sometimes see in the media.

This explains the importance of managing deviant behaviour at workplace. There are two types of deviance which are constructive deviance where employees engage in innovative behaviours that can provide the organization with the necessary creativity. Positive deviance also include non- compliance with dysfunctional directives and criticizing incompetent superiors hence contributing to organization competitive advantage (Mazni & Roziah 2011). The destructive deviance is where the employee intentionally wants to cause harm to others or to the organization for example purposely doing work incorrectly, taking unauthorized work breaks, insulting others, hitting a co-worker, yelling at others, talking loudly on the phone about a personal matter during working hours, not sharing information, gossiping, undermining fellow employees and destroying organizational property. Forms of workplace deviance can also include vandalism, theft; aggressive behaviour, sexual harassment, sabotage, embezzlement, insubordination and withholding effort among others. There are many reasons that explains why employees intentionally want to cause harm at work place and the bottom line is that employees would feel wronged as they believe that their expectations would have been breached hence the need for retaliation. The study will focus on destructive workplace behaviour which is believed to cause harm to the employees and the organization itself. The study wishes to establish causes of workplace behaviour and its impact on employees and the organization itself.

Secretaries are employed to handle correspondents, keep files and do clerical work for management within the university. These are support personnel who are important in assisting their bosses achieve their goals and providing quality service. Among their duties one of the critical tasks is to 'organize the boss' which means that there is need to establish good working relations that encompasses trustworthiness, reliability and dependability. However, while it has not been documented, one of the challenges faced by organizations in Nigeria is negative workplace deviant behaviour which is rampart in various sectors of industry. As such this has called for a close analysis of the causes of this behaviour and the possible impact on the organization.

A University is one organization that has a reasonable number of secretaries as it has a number of departments both for the academic and non-academic units. The study is focusing on a relatively new university which is still developing its systems, where secretaries play a critical role facilitating the enrolment of students, processing of results, and co-

ordination of critical meetings among other duties. This clearly shows that secretaries in this University are playing a critical supportive role to assist various units in meeting their objectives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Categories of Work Place Deviance

There are two types of deviance which are constructive deviance where employees engage in innovative behaviours that can provide the organization with the necessary creativity. The study is looking at destructive deviance where the employee intentionally wants to cause harm to the organization and this category of this kind of deviance is shown below.

Under destructive deviance there are two types of work place deviance which are interpersonal and organizational deviance. Interpersonal deviance is more to do with frustrating your peers including gossiping and assigning blame to them. These may be seen as minor but still they are unhealthy to the organization. There are many reasons that explains why employees intentionally want to cause harm at a workplace and the bottom line is that employees would feel wronged as they believe that their expectations would have been breached hence the need for retaliation.

An employee may spread false rumours or gossip about another in an effort to gain promotion or more favourable assignment. Supervisors who unfairly favour one employee over another or prevent deserving employees are also guilty of committing deviant act. Employees who regularly engage in gossip sessions can have a negative impact on employee morale. Strategies used for backstabbing include dishonesty, blame (false accusations), discrediting others and taking credit for another's work. Reasons behind back stabbing range from disregarding others, rights in favour of one's own gain, self-image management, revenge, jealousy and personal reasons. Organizational deviance encompasses production and property deviance. All behaviours in which deviant employees partake eventually have a negative impact on the overall productivity of the organization. Production deviance encompasses behaviour that violates organizational norms that are in respect to minimum expected quality and quantity of work to be accomplished as part of one's job. Strategies used to disturb organizational production include making personal calls, intentionally working slowly and cyber loafing where one surfs the web doing non-work related tasks such as chatting on social network sites. Property deviance is where employee either damage or acquire tangible assets without authorization including theft, sabotage, misusing funds, intentional making errors. According to a research by Gross-Schaeffer (2003), it concluded that 75% of people admit to stealing from their place of employment at some point in their lives, with such high statistics it seems everyone cart be a potential deviant in the workplace. Large and small firms have incurred huge financial losses where high levels of fraud cases have been recorded. Economically speaking the cost of employee theft, fraud and other forms of deviant acts at the workplace to a business weighs in above the value of what is taken. These include recruitment, interviewing and securing the cost of hiring employee which is borne by the organization. It is of significant importance that HR practitioners are aware of these causes, implications and therefore develop measures to curb such behaviour which can tarnish the organization's corporate image.

	Minor	Major
Organizational deviance	***Production Deviance*** • Intentionally working slow • Taking excessive breaks • Chatting with co-workers about non- work topics during working hours • Arriving at work late • Day dreaming while on job • Cyber loafing	***Production Deviance*** • Stealing from Organization • Dragging out of work to get overtime • Making photocopies at work for personal use without receiving permission. • Taking office supplies or equipment out without permission.
Interpersonal Deviance	***Political Deviance*** • Making fun of co-worker. • Acting rudely toward others • Blaming co-workers for mistakes made on job • Disobeying supervisor's instructions	***Personal Aggression*** • Cursing at workers • Humiliating co-workers • Bullying co-workers • Saying hurtful things to co-workers. • Assaulting with injury

Adapted from (Brown 2008:3)

Employee silence is deviant behaviour that falls on both interpersonal and organizational deviance. It becomes deviance when employee intentionally or unintentionally withdraws any kind of information that might be useful to the organization in particular if failure to have such information has a detrimental effect on the effectiveness of the organization.

❖ **Causes of Work Place Deviance**

Deviant behaviour normally takes place when an employee perceives that he/she has been wronged whether or not mistreatment actually occurred. According to Atemie & Akikibofori (2007) workplace deviant behaviour may be viewed as a negative reciprocity orientation where an individual return a negative treatment with a negative treatment 'an eye for eye'. This for some employees is strongly believed to be a suitable approach to their problem. The various causes of work place behaviour have been summarized below.

Organizational related factors

➢ Organizational climate

- ➤ Organizational justice
- ➤ Perceived organizational support
- ➤ Trust in organizations

Work-related factors

- ➤ Work stress
- ➤ Powerlessness

All these factors cause job dissatisfaction which will eventually lead to workplace deviance. According to Mazni & Roziah (2011), the causes of work place deviance range from individual related factors, organizational related factors and work-related factors. They further allude that interpersonal related factors, organizational related factors and work- related factors contribute to job satisfaction or lack of job satisfaction which results in deviant behaviour. According to Bolin and Heatherly (2001) dissatisfaction results in a higher incidence of minor offenses, but does not necessarily lead to severe offence. An employee who is not satisfied with her work may become less productive as their needs are not met.

Individual related factors range from those that fall under consciousness which are absenteeism, dishonesty and destructive behaviour. It has been established that people who are low in consciousness are normally irresponsible and untrustworthy while those who are high in consciousness are punctual, persistence and with self-control (Mazni & Roziah 2011). Negative affectivity results in anger, hostility and fear. This has been supported by (Gor 2007) who cited behaviour to do with work avoidance, work sabotage, abusive behaviour threats and overt attitudes as falling under negative affectivity. Employees who are high in negative affectivity have been found to be more provocative. The third aspect under interpersonal related factors is agreeableness. Employees who are low in agreeableness are normally antagonistic, annoying, and mistrustful and have low self-esteem. Such employees have been said to be unpredictable such that you can highly rely on them for support. Emotional intelligence is defined for the purpose of this study as the advanced ability to use self-awareness and insight into self and others' emotions to aid in cognitive processes to produce desired outcomes (Mayer & Salovey, & Caruso 2000). Employees who have high emotional intelligence are better performers and less aggressive while those with low emotional intelligence are known to blame others for errors (Mazni & Roziah 2011).

Research (Burton 2002 & Akikibofori 2008) has shown that the organizational climate is influenced by the leaders'/bosses attitudes in organizations. Work place deviance is closely related to abusive supervision. Abusive supervision is defined as the 'subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal or non -verbal behaviours (Ogunyemi, 2006). If abusive supervision is practiced, retaliation can occur. The employee may take this out on fellow employees if he/she fails to get an opportunity to take it out on his/her supervisor or is afraid to do so. Employees who perceive their bosses/organization as caring and supportive

have been shown to have reduced incidence of workplace deviant behaviour. According to Mitchel and Ambrose there are two factors that reduce workplace deviance which are organizational justice and organizational climate.

Organizational justice covers three aspects which are procedural justice, distributive justice and international justice. Procedural justice is concerned with having the decision making process made in a fair and transparent manner. Distributive justice is concerned with how the decision making process was made while international justice is involves interpersonal relationships and a sense of fairness which employees have with supervisors and other authority figures within an organization. Research has shown that procedural justice combined with international justice is beneficial in reducing work place deviance. Employees who are consulted and given opportunity to be involved in the decision making processes at their organization are less likely to act out, since their voices are valued. Employees would perceive organizational support and have trust in management. Ultimately it is the organization's responsibility to uphold norms and values to which organizations wishes to adhere. The work-related factors may come out of unclear job descriptions, work overload, conditions of service and lack of resource among others. Employees who are not clear on their tasks may be frustrated and commit their time to other non-work related factors. It is therefore critical for management to ensure that they come up with clear job descriptions and try to create conducive working environment for their employees. The perception of not being respected is one of the causes of work place deviance. A university community is one place where secretaries are seen as merely support staff and not contributing to core business.

❖ The Impact of Work Place Deviance

Large and small firms have incurred huge financial losses where high levels of fraud cases have been recorded. Economically speaking the cost of employee theft, fraud and other forms of deviant acts at the workplace to a business weighs in above the value of what is taken. These include recruitment, interviewing and securing the cost of hiring employee which is borne by the organization. The other impacts of work place deviance also are unpleasant emotions at work, depression, and loss of self- esteem, anxiety, sleeplessness, panic attacks, and a tense working environment among others.

METHODOLOGY

The study used mainly qualitative research. Qualitative methods allow one to dig deep in the subject matter thus reaching people's inner feelings and attributes about the subject under study, Dooley (2003). The research was a case study of 2 Universities in Nigeria. A case study design was used because the researcher wanted to understand the dynamics present within a single setting." A case study in its simplest form involves an investigator who makes a detailed examination of a single subject or phenomena, Borg and Gall (1989).Face to face structured interviews were earned out to gather information from the immediate bosses of the secretaries due to their small sample size as well as questionnaires were distribute to the secretaries. The interview questions were crafted basing on the objectives of the research paper. Each interview took at most 30 minutes. Both secondary and primary sources of data were used in this study. The primary source was gathered from the participants through interviews. The secondary sources of data were the HR records. Stratified random sampling was employed to come up with a sample size of 60 respondents with S being the immediate

bosses (management) and 52 were the secretaries. The total population of the secretaries and their bosses in these two universities was 170.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

> **Interpersonal Related Factors and Deviant Behaviour**

When asked whether they have been brought before a hearing or being cautioned for either stealing from the company the response to this was 10%. 20% of the respondents highlighted that they have been cautioned for verbal abuse and 40% of the respondents were frank enough to point that they have been cautioned for leaving or coming to work late. On taking long breaks, 15% of the respondents said they have been cautioned for taking excessive breaks. 10% o the respondents have been cautioned for another act of workplace deviance which is intentionally working slowly. Others responded by saying they have been cautioned for other offences which included using company consumables like bond paper to print their own personal things. 5% respondents said they have been brought before a disciplinary committee or cautioned by their supervisors. Moreover when asked whether one has been verbally abased by co-workers or superior 70% of the respondents said they have been verbally abused and 30% said they have never been verbally abused at work.

Response on disobedience to superiors, 65 % of the respondents said sometimes they willingly disobey their superiors. Superior-subordinate relationship was also another factor which the researcher was interested in finding out. 20% of the respondents also said they regularly disobey their superiors when delegated with challenging tasks. 15% of the respondents said they do not disobey their superiors willingly. Managers who misuse their power to harass their subordinates trigger negative emotions in the work place leading to personal aggression. Robinson O'Leary Kelly (1998) found that employees do mimic deviance behaviour from their leaders and co-workers what she referred to as 'monkey see monkey do'. These deviance acts contribute to a negative environment which will breed a hostile working environment, demoralizing employees and affect personal relationships between supervisors and subordinates. This is also supported by Fleet and Griffin (2006)'s conceptual framework that leadership has a role to play in motivating workplace deviance. When his or her expectations are not met the employee, 'perceive a psychological contract breach by their employers' (Chiu and Peng, 2008). This 'breach' of the psychological contract then presents a situation for potential problems particularly in the workplace.

When asked whether the employees have taken company property without authorization, 80% of the respondents answered that sometimes they do take company property without authorization. Mostly those who took company property without authorization fall between the ages of 2 1-29 who are the youngest group. 10% respondents said they regularly take company property without authorization from their superiors and the remaining 10% highlighted that they have never taken company property without authorization.

The research wanted to assess the prevalence of deviant behaviour by asking whether both managers and non-managerial staff have heard co-workers gossiping and spreading of wrong and false information. 75% said they have heard co-workers gossiping about other employees or spreading information through grapevine. Two managers pointed out that

they have been approached by employees seeking clarity on information spread through the grapevine. It is important to note that of the 75% respondents 65% were females which mean that only 10% out of the females have never heard anyone gossiping. Burroughs 2001 quoted by Bolin & Heatherly (2001) concluded that employees with aggressive personalities perceived more injustices and engage in more deviant behaviours at work than non aggressive workers. Mount. Harter, Witt and Barrick (2004) argue that those who are emotionally stable are less deviant. The age group was also another demographic variable, where those who fell into the 21-25 categories contributed a high percentage of those who have heard employees gossiping. The HR manager through the interview pointed out that rumours are spread especially when salary increases are announced. He said employees will be curious and eager to know the exact percentage increases. According to gender, female employees tend to gossip than their male counterparts. The major aim of the research was to find out whether employees commit deviance at the workplace. Employees do commit deviant act at the workplace evidenced by responses given. 40% of the respondents admitted to being cautioned for leaving or coming to work late. This is a common type of deviant behaviour particular to employees in various organizations as it affects the production output due to hours lost when employees engage in non-work related activities. This can be attributed to organizational and interpersonal factors. Organizational factors include poor remuneration, poor working environments and interpersonal factors like supervisor-subordinate relationship which might not be good. Vardil 2001 quoted by Bolin& Heatherly (2001) argues that the more laws and rules are implemented in an organization, the more incidents of misbehaviour. However the other percentage said they have never committed any deviant act. This can be as result of respondents being afraid to be open or it can be due to the fact that they have never been cautioned.

One of the responses scales on stealing from the organization which is a form of property deviance was not responded to. The reason can either be, the respondents were afraid to disclose that at one time they stole from the organization they chose trivial acts like working slowly, taking excessive breaks and coming to work or leaving early. From the data obtained the researcher was able to analyze and conclude that the prevalence of deviant behaviour is common within the organization as all the respondents have been cautioned for either property deviant behaviour or production deviant.

The prevalence of deviant behaviour within organizations was also seen by responses given on the use of company property without authorization. As shown by the statistics provided respondents confessed that they sometimes take company property without authorization. This ranges from small items like stationery to assets like laptops or even pool vehicles. This can also be attributed to the fact that employees may not be aware of the procedures needed to be followed when asking for permission to use company property.

Females tend to gossip a lot compared to their male counterparts. This is evidenced by the high percentage of responses given by females saying they have heard co-workers gossiping and this can be attributed to the fact that they will be part of the gossiping teams which are involved in grapevine. A close analysis revealed that those who gossip are in the age group of 21-35 .Young employees also tend to gossip and want to know what is happening in the organization at that particular time. This is a common type of political deviance in the organization thus it can be concluded that political deviance is also common in organizations.

Grapevine or gossiping can hamper smooth flow of information and this can lead to false information being spread. Davies as quoted in Stoner (1995) identified four possible types of grapevine chains. These are the various paths through which informal communication is passed through the organization. The four types are the single strand, gossip, probability and cluster chains. In the gossip chain, one person seeks out and tells anyone he or she has obtained. The chain is always used when the information is interesting but non job related. Thus the information can relate to social life of an individual or pertaining to families. This has an impact on the individual especially when information about his or her private life is spread.

RECOMMENDATIONS

➢ Effective communication skills help leaders to build strong - Relationship with subordinates which eventually lead to an effective organization. Communication skills are needed to deal with employees especially those with low socialization skills and diffuse aggressive personalities. Upward communication should be encouraged so that employees will feel involved and boost self work, self esteem and reduce incidence of work place deviance.

➢ Leaders should have empathy to subordinates and avoid labelling people for their beliefs

➢ A clear transparent grievance procedure should be in place to allow employees to give feedback where they feel mistreated, If employees can vent their anger through a transparent procedure this reduce deviance incidences as no one will feel powerless to voice theft happiness.

➢ Distributive justice related to pay where employees would need information regarding to their pay grade, job description, basis of allocation bonus and increment.

➢ Managers should avoid what is normally referred to as political deviance where employees are asked to work beyond working hours as this is normally followed by sabotage.

CONCLUSION

Workplace deviance behaviour is a phenomenal which each and every organization will face and has significant direct economic consequences to the organization. Managers often neglect work place deviance behaviour until it is too late. It is important that managers know root causes of such behaviour so that they come up with a relevant solutions.

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