

## **Influence of Organizational Formal Control on Workplace Deviance: A Pilot Study**

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**Abstract:** This pilot study investigated the Influence of organizational formal control on workplace deviance among 81 teaching staff from various higher education institutions in Nigeria, including universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. A web-based survey was used to collect data. The data collected was analysed using Partial Least Squares (PLS) path modeling. As predicted, the path coefficient results showed that perceived behaviour control was negatively related to interpersonal deviance. The results also demonstrated a significant negative relationship between perceived behaviour control and organisational deviance. On the contrary, the finding of this study revealed that perceptions of outcomes controls were not found to influence individuals to behave in a positive way at work. Specifically, the results of the structural model analysis did show that those employees who were subjected to outcomes controls were less likely to engage both interpersonal deviance and organizational deviance. The implications of the study for theory and research on workplace deviance are discussed.

**Key words:** Workplace deviance • Organisational control • Behaviour control • Outcomes control • Pilot study

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Workplace deviance is pervasive phenomenon and potentially destructive or harmful to both organization and its members [1, 2]. As defined by Robinson and Bennett [3], workplace deviance is a voluntary behaviour engaged by employee that is contrary to the significant organizational norms and it is considered as a threat to the well-being of an organization and/or its members. It is estimated that in the year 2010, about 45% of the U.S. retailers' inventory shortage was attributed to employee theft [4]. It is also reported that in a given year, about 35% of adult Americans have experienced workplace bullying [5]. In Nigeria, the issue of workplace deviance has also gained considerable media attention in recent years. In particular, issues concerning cases involving cybercrime [6], financial misconduct [7] and poor attitude to work [8] have been frequently reported in the newspapers and other local and national media. Additionally, Houreld [9] reported that in the Nigerian educational setting, for several years, the incidences of sexual harassment in Nigeria's universities has been rampant and yet, little was done about it.

Because of its pervasiveness and significant cost, several factors have been considered as antecedents of workplace deviant behaviour. To date, some of the factors that have been considered include breach of psychological contract [10], organizational injustice [11], abusive supervision [12] and personality traits, among others [13]. Despite these empirical studies, however, little attention has been paid to the influence of organisational formal controls on workplace deviance. To fill in this gap, the present study examined the effects of organisational formal controls on deviant behaviour at the workplace. Organizational formal control is defined as mechanisms put in place by management such as rules and regulations, disciplinary measures and auditing with the aim of monitoring, detecting, punishing and minimizing the occurrence of improper conduct [14]. Organizational formal control is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct consisting of behaviour control and outcomes control [15, 16]. Behaviour control is characterized by high levels of monitoring, supervising, directing, coaching, mentoring, providing focused feedback, encouragement and raising awareness among employees about what constitutes desired behaviours [17]. On the other hand, outcome-based control refers a process through which

supervisor manages authority with and/or maintains control of subordinates, by telling them how to do their jobs and then constantly monitors their efforts to guard them against deviation from the set goal [18].

In an attempt to better understand the effects of organisational formal controls on workplace deviant behaviour, we draw upon organisational control theory [19, 20]. Organisational control theory proposes that formal control instituted by an organization should theoretically be able to regulate employee behaviour at work through effective monitoring and supervision, coaching, mentoring and providing feedback, among others [19]. The robust effects of organisational formal controls on workplace deviant behaviour are well documented in the organisational behaviour literature [21, 22]. In particular, de Lara, Tacoronte and Ding [22] conducted a study to investigate the relationship between behaviour control and cyberloafing (i.e. organisational deviance), defined as employees making use of the Internet for personal use when they should be working. The participants of the study were 758 non-teaching staff from a public university in Spain. The Structural equation modeling (SEM) results showed that perceived behaviour control, defined as disciplinary practices against misconduct in the workplace was negatively related to cyberloafing. Mathieu and Pousa [23] examined the influence of behaviour control on salespeople's lies among 81 undergraduate students, who had professional experience in selling from Canada. The findings of the study showed that behaviour control, defined as supervisory coaching potentially reduces salespersons' lies to the customers, managers and/or organization on expenses reports.

Likewise, using a sample of 210 salespeople from four Korean companies, Choi, Dixon and Jung [24] found a significant negative relationship between outcome-based control and dysfunctional behaviours (i.e. salesperson's negative behaviour directed at the company's division), suggesting that outcomes control minimizes salesperson's tendency to engage in organisational deviance. Conversely, Ramaswami [25] included 318 members of the American Marketing Association (AMA) from the United States to investigate the relationship between outcome control and dysfunctional behaviour. The findings of the study showed that use of outcome control was positively related with dysfunctional behaviour (defined as negative employee responses against organisation's marketing control systems), suggesting that outcome based control has negative consequences because it limits salesperson's autonomy and it is a signal that organisation does not trust their

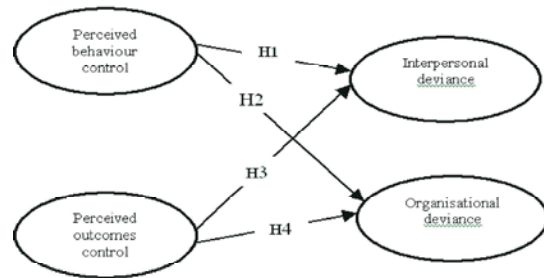


Fig. 1: Conceptual model with hypotheses

employees. Based on the empirical evidences that have been presented above the following hypotheses are advanced:

- H1 : Perceived behaviour control is negatively related to interpersonal deviance.
- H2 : Perceived behaviour control is negatively related to organisational deviance.
- H3 : Perceived outcomes control is negatively related to interpersonal deviance.
- H4 : Perceived outcomes control is negatively related to organisational deviance.

## MATERIALS AND METHOD

**Procedure and Participants:** Data for this study was collected via a web-based survey. The link to the web-based survey was emailed to the respondents. The survey included measures of workplace deviance, perceived behaviour control, perceived outcomes control and demographic variables. Several reminders were sent to those respondents who were yet to complete a survey after three weeks via emails and mobile phone to increase response rates [26]. The Participants were teachers (N = 81) from various universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. Of 81 participants, 51 were males and 30 females; 45 were senior lecturers and above and 36 were below the rank of senior lecturer; 44 hold Master's degree, 25 hold first degree (Bachelor/Higher National Diploma) and 12 hold a doctorate degree.

### Measures

**Workplace Deviance:** The workplace deviance scale developed by Bennett and Robinson [27] measured both deviant behaviour directed against individuals (interpersonal deviance) and deviant behaviour directed against the organisations (organisational deviance). Both dimensions of workplace deviance were rated on a 4-point Likert scale anchored by: 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 =

disagree, 3 = agree and 4 = strongly agree. Example of adapted item is “acted rudely toward colleagues at work The Bennett and. Robinson's (2000) workplace deviance scale has been found to be reliable in the previous studies [2, 28].

**Perceived Organisational Controls:** To measure employees’ perception of controls, first, we adapted 9-items from Babakus, Cravens, Grant, Ingram and LaForge’s [15] sales management control scale to measure perceived behaviour control and then we adapted 5-items from sales control measures developed by Miao, *et al.* [29]. All the respondents rated themselves using 4-point Likert scale anchored by: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree and 4 = strongly agree. Example of adapted item is “my head of department monitors my performance on achieving certain level of job

performance.” The organisational formal control measures adapted in this study were considered appropriate because previous studies have found them to be reliable [30].

**RESULTS**

**Measurement Model:** We ascertain the construct validity, following two major step modeling approach as suggested by Anderson and Gerbing [31]. First, we assessed the convergent validity and the reliability of the constructs as shown in Table 1 and Table 2 respectively. As a rule of thumb, construct validity is ascertained if the loadings are greater than 0.7, composite reliability co-efficient is greater than 0.7, average variance extracted is greater than 0.5 and Cronbach alpha co-efficient exceeded the cut-off point of 0.7 [32-34].

Table 1: Cross loadings

Latent variables	Items	Interpersonal deviance	Organisational deviance	Perceived behaviour control	Perceived outcomes control
	IDB03	0.80	0.68	-0.64	-0.70
	IDB04	0.90	0.72	-0.59	-0.56
	IDB05	0.82	0.62	-0.51	-0.48
	IDB06	0.97	0.87	-0.71	-0.67
	IDB07	0.87	0.75	-0.74	-0.72
	IDB08	0.86	0.73	-0.61	-0.55
	IDB10	0.72	0.74	-0.39	-0.29
	IDB11	0.86	0.86	-0.73	-0.68
	IDB12	0.86	0.91	-0.73	-0.69
	IDB13	0.95	0.91	-0.73	-0.74
	IDB15	0.78	0.86	-0.83	-0.77
Interpersonal deviance	IDB09	0.95	0.91	-0.73	-0.74
	ODB01	0.79	0.88	-0.64	-0.67
	ODB02	0.82	0.86	-0.65	-0.62
	ODB03	0.94	0.89	-0.75	-0.68
	ODB04	0.92	0.91	-0.87	-0.86
	ODB05	0.69	0.86	-0.83	-0.78
	ODB06	0.70	0.89	-0.80	-0.76
	ODB07	0.80	0.95	-0.79	-0.72
	ODB08	0.94	0.94	-0.77	-0.77
	ODB09	0.76	0.85	-0.58	-0.55
Organisational deviance	ODB10	0.90	0.81	-0.74	-0.65
	PBC01	-0.69	-0.74	0.88	0.89
	PBC02	-0.51	-0.52	0.70	0.55
	PBC03	-0.68	-0.78	0.85	0.73
	PBC04	-0.73	-0.77	0.81	0.87
Perceived behaviour control	PBC05	-0.52	-0.56	0.79	0.78
	POC01	-0.65	-0.73	0.91	0.94
	POC02	-0.78	-0.80	0.91	0.96
	POC03	-0.77	-0.76	0.89	0.94
Perceived outcomes control	POC04	-0.63	-0.76	0.91	0.95

Table 2: Reliability and validity of constructs

Latent variables	Indicators	Average variance extracted	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Interpersonal deviance	12	0.75	0.97	0.97
Organisational deviance	10	0.79	0.97	0.97
Perceived behaviour control	5	0.65	0.90	0.87
Perceived outcomes control	4	0.90	0.97	0.96

Table 3: Latent Variable Correlations

Latent variables	1	2	3	4
Interpersonal deviance	<b>0.86</b>			
Organisational deviance	0.79	<b>0.89</b>		
Perceived behaviour control	-0.78	-0.85	<b>0.81</b>	
Perceived outcomes control	-0.75	-0.81	0.76	<b>0.95</b>

Note: Diagonals (bold face) represent the square root of the average variance extracted while the other entries represent the correlations.

Table 4: Path coefficients and hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Relations	Beta	Standard error	T-statistics	Findings
H1	PBC -> IDB	-0.74	0.22	3.43**	Supported
H2	PBC -> ODB	-0.86	0.18	4.81**	Supported
H3	POC -> IDB	-0.05	0.22	0.22	Not supported
H4	POC -> ODB	0.02	0.18	0.10	Not supported

Interpersonal deviance (R<sup>2</sup>) = 62%

Organisational deviance (R<sup>2</sup>) = 72%

Note: \*\*p < 0.01

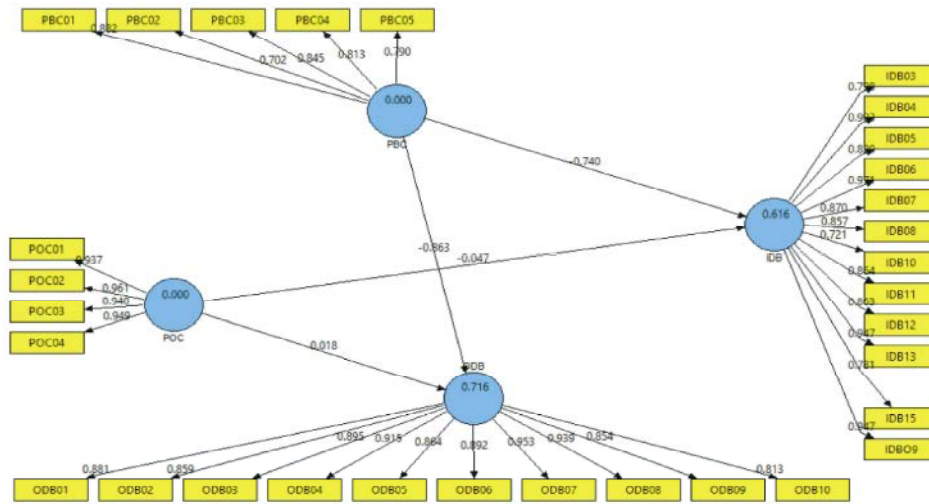


Fig. 2: Results of the structural model analysis

Second, we performed a discriminant validity of the construct following the Fornell and Lacker's [33] recommendation. On the basis of this recommendation, the average variance shared between each construct and its measures should exceed the variance shared between the construct and other constructs [33].

As presented in Table 3 above, the correlations for each construct is less than the square root of the average variance extracted suggesting adequate discriminant validity of the construct [34, 35].

**Structural Model:** Following the measurement model next was the structural model. The results are presented in Table 4 and Figure 2. The R-square values were 0.62 to 0.72 which suggest that the modeled variables can explain 62% and 72% of the variance of the interpersonal deviance and organisational deviance respectively.

Hypothesis 1 stated that perceived behaviour control is negatively related to interpersonal deviance. The results in Table 4 and Figure 2 shows that hypothesis 1 is supported in view of the significant negative relationship between perceived behaviour control and interpersonal deviance ( $\beta = -0.74$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). Hypothesis 2 predicted that perceived behaviour control is negatively related to organisational deviance. As shown in Table 4 and figure 2, hypothesis 2 receives empirical support ( $\beta = -0.86$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) because perceived behaviour control is negatively and significantly associated with organisational deviance. Hypothesis 3 stated that perceived outcomes control is negatively related to interpersonal deviance, while hypothesis 4 predicted that perceived outcomes control is negatively related to organisational deviance. The results in Table 4 and Figure 2 shows that hypothesis 3 and 4 are not supported ( $\beta = -0.05$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ) and ( $\beta = 0.02$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ) respectively.

## DISCUSSION

This pilot study investigated the influence of organizational formal control on workplace deviance among teaching faculty members from various higher education institutions in Nigeria. The results of the study provided empirical support for the influence of organizational formal control on workplace deviance. Specifically, the results showed that perceived behaviour control is negatively related to interpersonal deviance. Building on organisational control theory [19, 20], we argued that formal control instituted by an organization should be able to regulate employee behaviour and motivate them to refrain from deviant behaviour at work. This prediction is consistent with the previous studies conducted among professional salespeople [e.g. 23]. The results further suggested that perceived behaviour control is negatively related to organisational deviance. This results is also consistent with de Lara, *et al.* [22], who have argued that the use of behaviour control potentially reduce the tendency of employees to engage in organizational deviance (i.e. cyberloafing). On the contrary, the finding of this study revealed that perceptions of outcomes controls were not found to influence individuals to behave in a positive way at work. Specifically, the results of the structural model analysis did show that those employees who were subjected to outcomes controls were less likely to engage both interpersonal deviance and organizational deviance. The results suggest that employee who experiences high degree of outcomes controls may even be inclined to engage in workplace deviance.

There are few implications of this study for theory and research on workplace deviance. First, the significant relationship between behaviour based controls and workplace deviance would imply that behaviour controls makes a significant practical contribution when designing a strategy to control deviant behaviour at work [22]. Secondly, the non-significant relationship between outcome based controls and workplace deviance would imply that outcome based control has negative consequences because it limits salesperson's autonomy and it is a signal that organisation does not trust their employees, which provoke them to engage in workplace deviance [36].

It is noteworthy that the present study has certain limitations that may have affected the measurement of theoretical constructs. Specifically, the use of self-reported measures to collect data is not adequate measures of situations and it is usually associated with

social desirability and/or common method bias. Therefore, future study should include multiple sources, such as peers, subordinates and supervisors to assess deviant behaviours [37]. A second concern is the use of cross-sectional research design in this study, which cannot allow inferences to be made. Nevertheless, given the limitation of a cross-sectional research design, future research should examine the influence of organizational formal control on workplace deviance using a longitudinal research design to describe patterns of change in employees' behaviour. Another limitation that warrant note is relatively small sample size. In particular, participant in the present study were mainly teaching staff, which make it impossible to generalize the findings. Hence, future studies should include non-teaching staff in their sample because deviant acts are committed by all categories of employees in the organisation [3].

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