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# Organizational Commitment, Occupational Stress, and Core Self-Evaluation as Predictors of Workplace Deviance

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**Abstract:** The study investigated organizational commitment, occupational stress, and core self-evaluation as predictors of workplace deviance in the Nigerian civil service. Two hundred and eighty four (284) adults drawn from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka campus participated in the study. Questionnaires were used to elicit information from the participants. Results of regression analyses show that there was a significant negative relationship between organizational commitment and workplace deviance. Also, core self-evaluation was negatively correlated to workplace deviance. This implies that individuals with positive core self-evaluation are less likely to engage in workplace deviance, while individuals with negative core self-evaluation are more likely to engage in workplace deviance.

**Keywords:** Workplace Deviance, Job Commitment, Job Stress, Core Self-Evaluation

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## 1. Introduction

Deviant workplace behaviour is defined as voluntary behaviour that violates significant organizational norms and in so doing threatens the wellbeing of an organization, its members, or both. Although the majority of deviant acts are considered negative, there exist positive as well. Positive deviance is defined as intentional behaviour that departs from the norms of a referent group in honorable ways (Appelbaum, Laconi, & Matousek, 2007). Positive deviant behaviour is commendable and focuses on actions with laudable intentions, regardless of the outcomes. Positive deviance comprises innovative behaviour, noncompliance with dysfunctional directives, and criticizing incompetent superiors. Positive deviant behaviours are these that are usually not authorized by the organizations, but in the end they help the organization reaching its goals. In order to get into positive deviant behaviour employees need to be psychologically empowered. When employees are empowered they are able to participate in decision-making and are more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviours that depart positively from the norms of the organization in a way

that is beneficial to the organization.

Due to the emerging nature of workplace incivility, theories that aim specifically to workplace incivility are scarce. Nevertheless, Andersson and Pearson's (1999) spiral theory of incivility is very popular. The spiral begins at the starting point where an uncivil act is acknowledged and perceived as uncivil by an individual due to violated norms or unacceptable conduct. A victim's desire for revenge is likely to result in an act of incivility in response to the incivility experienced. As the spiral continues, one or both parties are likely to reach a tipping point due to anger, or insult, which could trigger intentional intense behaviors such as violence or aggression. The spiral of incivility is an epidemic that could continue until justice is restored, forgiveness is given or asked, or one of the parties resigns. Further, the primary spiral could trigger a secondary spiral. A secondary spiral is triggered by observers of incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). For example, members who observe incivility spirals are likely to engage in uncivil acts; thus, increasing organization wide incivility. Additionally, observing negative responses to incivility also give rise to secondary incivility spirals. Based upon the spiral theory of incivility it can be concluded that incivility is a

vicious cycle which can be triggered from a minor issue and escalate to severe coarseness. Essentially, it can spread like a virus that is difficult to stop or control. In order to discontinue incivility spirals, it is imperative to establish a civil culture and climate in the organization, especially a culture of zero-tolerance towards incivility (Pearson & Porath, 2005).

Workplace incivility has detrimental consequences on both victims and organizations (Doshi & Wang, 2014). On the individual level, victims suffer from psychological distress due to disrespectful actions and words (Estes & Wang, 2008). They experience anxiety, depression, insomnia, low self-esteem, and stress (Estes & Wang, 2008). Individuals who have encountered incivility are often traumatized and constantly worried that they may be targeted again (Cortina, 2008). In fact, the victims spend a majority of their time at work thinking and talking about the uncivil experiences they went through (Cortina, 2008). Further, workplace incivility reduces individual creativity, performance, motivation, focus, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction (Estes & Wang, 2008), ultimately leading the victims to resign from their job (Lim & Cortina, 2005). On the organizational level, incivility results in high turnover, lack of productivity, absenteeism, and financial losses (Cortina & Magley, 2009; Pearson & Porath, 2005). In addition, observers of workplace incivility are also likely to engage in uncivil behaviors themselves, consequently increasing the occurrence of organizational incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999).

Workplace deviance has been related to occupational stress (Spector & Fox, 2005; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). According to Spector and Fox's model of workplace deviance behaviour, perceived stressors in the workplace can lead to emotional reactions and as a result can induce deviant behaviours in organizations. Occupational stress is stress involving work (Spector & Fox, 2005). Stress is defined in terms of its physical and physiological effects on a person, and can be a mental, physical or emotional strain. It can also be a tension or a situation or factor that can cause stress. Occupational stress can occur when there is a discrepancy between the demands of the environment/workplace and an individual's ability to carry out and complete these demands (Henry & Evans, 2008). Omar, Halim, Zainah, Farhadi, Nasir & Kairudin (2011) found that occupational stress is positively related to workplace deviance. This means that employees who experience occupational stress are more likely to engage in workplace deviance.

Occupational stress results from the interaction of the worker and the conditions of work. Views differ on the importance of worker characteristics versus working conditions as the primary cause of job stress. The differing viewpoints suggest different ways to prevent stress at work. Differences in individual characteristics such as personality and coping skills can be very important in predicting whether certain job conditions will result in stress. In other words, what is stressful for one person may not be a problem for another. This viewpoint underlies prevention strategies that focus on workers and ways to help them cope with

demanding job conditions.

Zainuddin (2006) investigated the relationship between occupational stress and workplace deviant behaviour. A total of 58 managers, executives and assistants' executives participated in the study. Data were collected by using simple random sampling. A questionnaire comprises three measures which are demographic background of participants, occupational stress, and deviant behaviour at the workplace. The findings showed that there are no significant differences between demographic factors such as marital status, gender, age and occupational stress. Demographic factors were not found to have any relations to workplace deviant behaviour. The findings also revealed that the relationship between occupational stress and workplace deviant behaviour was moderately significant correlated.

Organizational commitment has been shown to predict workplace deviance (Gill, Meyer, Lee, Shin, & Yoon (2011) examined the nature of the relations between affective and continuance components of organizational commitment and deviant workplace behaviours in a sample of 120 Korean employees and their supervisors. As expected, they found that affective commitment was negatively related, and continuance commitment was positively, albeit modestly, related to supervisor ratings of deviant work behaviour. In organizational behaviour and industrial and organizational psychology, organizational commitment is the individual's psychological attachment to the organization. The basis behind many of these studies was to find ways to improve how workers feel about their jobs so that these workers would become more committed to their organizations. Organizational commitment predicts work variables such as turnover, organizational citizenship behaviour, job performance and workplace deviance. Employees who have high organizational commitment are less likely to engage in workplace deviance. Some of the factors such as role stress, empowerment, job insecurity and employability, and distribution of leadership have been shown to be connected to a worker's sense of organizational commitment.

Fagbohunge, Akinbode, and Ayodeji (2012) examined the relationship between employee's organizational reactions and deviant behaviours in the workplace. Drawing on the organizational climate and workplace deviance literatures, it was hypothesized that deviant workplace behaviours of males will be significantly different from that of their female counterpart. Likewise, that there will be a significant positive relationship between employees organisational reactions and various facets of deviant behaviour in the workplace. Six hundred and ninety six employees completed the surveys. The results showed that male participants were significantly different from their female counterparts on production deviance, personal aggression, political deviance and property deviance respectively. Specifically, production deviance, personal aggression and political deviance were higher among females than males. Second, multiple regression analysis revealed that organizational reaction variables (supervision, company identification, kinds of work, amount of work, co-workers, physical work conditions

and financial rewards) are significant predictors of different facets of workplace deviant behaviours among workers. Finally, mean deviant behaviours of males at both controlled work environment and less controlled work environment were higher and significantly different from that of their female counterparts. Interaction between gender and work environment control was not significant as expected. Sprung and Jex (2012) conducted a study to determine whether work locus of control served as a moderator of the relationship between work stressors and counterproductive work behaviour. In order to examine this relationship, 191 full-time working adults employed in various occupations were surveyed via the Study Response Project. Results indicated that the interaction between work locus of control and work stressors accounted for 1% to 2% of the variance in counterproductive work behaviour. Specifically, organizational constraints and interpersonal conflict were more strongly related to counterproductive behaviour for employees with an external (vs. internal) work locus of control. This suggests work locus of control as an important variable to consider in counterproductive work behaviour research.

Galperin (2002) conducted an empirical analysis that examines the relationship between deviance and individual, job, organisational, and cultural factors as determinants of deviance in the workplace, among six hundred and eighty-eight workers. The study proposed that the extent to which people feel confident in performing their roles would have an impact on the relationship between job factors and workplace deviance. It was hypothesised that the role breadth self-efficacy both moderates and mediates the relationship between job autonomy and deviant behaviour. Results of the study generally indicated support for the hypotheses relating to individual, job, and organisational factors.

Vardi (2001) examined the ethical climate that was prevalent in a metal-products company that employed 138 individuals, and submitted there was a strong negative relationship between the ethical climate of the organization and the “organizational misbehaviour” that was observed. Organizational misbehaviour was defined as any intentional action by members of organizations that defies and violates shared organizational norms and core societal values. In addition, regression analysis revealed that ethical climate has more of an immediate impact on behaviour than overall organizational climate.

Tobin (2000) examined the effects of organisational structure on aggression and violence in the workplace. For organisational aggression and violence, result of the study revealed that organisational factors interact with other behavioural determinants, such as personality and individual affectivity. Through a literature review, it was submitted that structural characteristics can lead to deviant behaviour when there is an incongruence of needs/expectations and environment between the individual and the organization. According to the findings also, individuals progress along a frustration –violence continuum until intervening action is taken by the individual or the organization to overcome

obstacles to goals or expectations.

Peterson (2002) conducted a study to determine whether deviant workplace behaviour could possibly be predicted from the ethical climate of an organization. Once again, the Ethical Climate Questionnaire (ECQ) was used to determine the ethical climate of organizations of the respondents. In order to determine workplace deviance, a survey was conducted, similar to that used by Robinson and Bennett (1995), which included three items from each of the four classifications described above. The results that Peterson (2002) obtained indicated several correlations between the type of deviance and the climate identified in the organization. The clearest relationship was between Political Deviance and a Caring climate. The implication is that when employees feel that the organization is concerned with the welfare of its workers, they are less likely to experience, or engage in, Political Deviance.

Omar, Halim, Zainah, Farhadi, Nasir and Kairudin (2011) investigated the relationship between workplace deviant behaviour and other work-related stress and job satisfaction. Data were collected from 162 participants who were working as civil servants in different sectors. The results showed that both job stress and satisfaction predicted workplace deviant behaviour. A significant positive relationship between stress and workplace deviant behaviour was established. However, the study could not find significant relationship between gender, marital status and workplace deviant behaviour.

One of the more consistent and significant relationships that has been examined in the literature is the relationship between core self-evaluations and job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2003; Bono & Judge, 2003;). In fact, when Judge et al. (2003) developed the construct of core self-evaluations, they did so in an effort to identify a valid dispositional predictor of job satisfaction. Since the creation of this construct in the Judge et al. (2003) study, research has continued to support the relationship between core self-evaluations and job satisfaction, which suggests that people who appraise themselves positively (i.e., rate themselves highly on core self-evaluations) are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs. Additional research has also confirmed that CSE traits can predict job satisfaction over time (Dormann, Fay, Zapf, & Frese, 2006). People who have positive core-self evaluations are likely to be satisfied with their jobs throughout the duration of their lives spent in the work environment. Thus, consistent with hypotheses based on social exchange, both job satisfaction and POS are likely to be negatively related to deviance behaviour among such individuals.

## 2. The Present Study

The present study is to determine the roles of occupational stress, organizational commitment and core self-evaluation on workplace deviance. Job stress has been related to work deviance (Spector & Fox, 2005). The relationships between job commitment and deviance is established (e.g. Gill, Meyer, Lee, Shin, & Yoon, 2011; Judge et al., 2003; Bono &

Judge, 2003), examined the role of core self-evaluation in job satisfaction. However, no study has examined core self-evaluation as a predictor of deviance in such light that those who have positive self may not engage in deviance either as revenge or not because they have to protect their self-image and reputation.

The present study contends that workplace deviance may be affect-driven among low-emotional stability individuals, a social exchange model wherein attitudes impact deviance may not be especially relevant. Conversely, for individuals who are calm, optimistic, stable (i.e., emotionally stable) and who have positive evaluation of their selves, initial affective reactions to events may be less likely to lead directly to coping behaviour. Instead, affective reactions may more likely impact their job attitudes which in turn impact their job satisfaction. This of course may be a result of the assault of deviance on self-image. One wonders if a "dirty" revenge will be considered by those with positive self since experience of deviance may be considered absurd against the background of positive self they strive to protect.

To this end, this study is interested in investigating the following questions: Will occupational stress predict workplace deviance? Will organizational commitment predict workplace deviance? Will core self-evaluation play a predict workplace deviance?

In view of the literature reviewed, the following hypotheses were tested:

1. Organizational commitment will not significantly predict workplace deviance
2. Occupational stress will significantly predict workplace deviance
3. Core self-evaluation will not significantly predict workplace deviance.

In this study Deviant workplace behaviour refers to a voluntary behaviour that violates significant organizational norms and in so doing threatens the wellbeing of an organization, its members, or both as measured by the Workplace Deviance Scale was developed by Robinson and Benett (1995); Occupational stress refers to stress involving work (Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein, 1983) as measured by the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) developed by Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein, (1983); Organizational commitment refers to a psychological state that characterizes an employee's relationship with an organisation (Meyer and Allen 1991) as measured by the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire developed by Meyer & Allen (1997); Core self-evaluation refers to the fundamental evaluations that people make about themselves and their functioning in their environment (Judge, Locke, and Durham, 1997) as measured by the Core Self-Evaluations Scale (CSES) developed by Judge, Erez, Bono and Thoresen (2003).

### 3. Method

#### Participants

Two hundred and eighty-four participants were randomly drawn from the non-academic staff of University of Nigeria,

Nsukka campus. One hundred and sixty-three participants were females. Their age ranged from 20-65 years, with a mean age of 38.18.

#### Instrument

Four instruments were used for data collection. They are; Workplace Deviance Scale, Occupational Stress Scale, Organizational Commitment Scale and Core Self Evaluation Scale.

#### The Workplace Deviance Scale

The Workplace Deviance Scale was developed by Robinson and Benett (1995). The scale is comprised of 12 items that show organizational deviance (deviant behaviour that is harmful to organization). Robinson and Benett (1995) reported an internal reliability of 0.81. Respondents were requested to indicate the extent to which they were engaged in each of the behaviours on a 5-point Likert type response format ranging from 1(never) to 5(always). All items were positively worded. Sample include such as: "I come in late to work without permission," and "I usually curse people at work". Cronbach's alpha of.89 of the scale was obtained for the present study.

#### Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ)

The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire was developed by Meyer & Allen (1997). It measures three facets of commitment which are; affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Affective commitment denotes a sense of belonging and emotional attachment to the organization, continuance commitment emphasizes the perceived costs of leaving the organization whereas normative commitment reflects the perceived obligation to remain with the organization. The questionnaire contained 18 items. Responses were requested to rate using a 5-point Likert scale with anchors labeled such as: 0 = strongly disagree, 1 = disagree, 2 = neither agree nor disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree. Allen & Meyer (1996) reported Cronbach's alpha of.87. Cronbach's alpha of.89 of the scale was obtained for the present study.

#### The Core Self-Evaluations Scale

The Core Self-Evaluations Scale (CSES) was developed by Judge, Erez, Bono and Thoresen (2003). The Core Self-Evaluation Scale was designed to directly measure the broad personality trait core self-evaluation. It is a 12 item questionnaire, and uses a five-point Likert scale (i.e., strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree) to score responses. Judge et al., reported a Cronbach's alpha of.65. Cronbach's alpha of.89 of the scale was obtained for the present study.

#### Occupational Stress.

Occupational Stress was measured by Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein, (1983) through Perceived Stress Scale (PSS). It is the most widely used psychological instrument for measuring the perception of stress. It is a measure of the degree to which situations in one's life are appraised as stressful. Items were designed to tap how unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded respondents find their lives. The scale also includes a number of direct queries about current levels of experienced stress. The scale was designed

for use in community samples with at least a junior high school education. The items are easy to understand, and the response alternatives are simple to grasp. Moreover, the questions are of a general nature and hence are relatively free of content specific to any subpopulation group. The questions ask about feelings and thoughts during the last month. Scores are obtained by reversing responses (e.g., 0 = 4, 1 = 3, 2 = 2, 3 = 1 & 4 = 0) to the four positively stated items (items 4, 5, 7, & 8) and then summing across all scale items. Cohen et al., (1983) reported a Cronbach’s alpha of .91. Cronbach’s alpha of .77 of the scale was obtained for the present study.

#### 4. Procedure

Three hundred copies of each questionnaire were

distributed to participants in various offices and hostels around University of Nigeria, Nsukka campus. They were informed that the questionnaires were for research purpose, and that the information they provided would be treated with utmost confidence. They were also urged to respond honestly to the items in the questionnaires. All the questionnaires were returned but 16 copies were discarded because they were not properly filled, and 284 copies were used for data analysis.

#### 5. Design and Statistics

A cross-sectional survey design was employed. Regression analysis was used to analyze the data using SPSS version 17 computer program.

#### 6. Results

Table 1. Correlations.

	Deviance	1	2	3	4	5
1	Commitment	-.12*				
2	Core-self evaluation	-.26**	-.13*			
3	Occupational stress	.05	.17**	-.02		
4	Gender	.13*	.04	-.09	.11	
5	Age	.10	.05	.05	-.05	-.14*

\*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).  
 \*\*. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

The results as shown in table 1 indicated that workplace deviance has a significant negative relationship with organizational commitment ( $r = -.12, p < .05$ ). This implies that as organizational commitment increases, an individual is less likely to engage in workplace deviance.

Workplace deviance also has a significant negative relationship with core self-evaluation ( $r = -.26, p < .01$ ). This implies that individuals with positive core self-evaluation are less likely to engage in workplace deviance.

Table 2. ANOVA Summary.

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	1772.550	3	590.850	10.149	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	16300.690	280	58.217		
	Total	18073.239	283			

a. Predictors: (Constant), commitment, coreself, stress; b. Dependent Variable: deviance

Table 3. Coefficients<sup>a</sup>.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	46.859	5.428		8.634	.000
	coreself	-.438	.089	-.282	-4.932	.000
	Stress	.101	.076	.077	1.332	.184
	commitment	-.184	.064	-.168	-2.888	.004

a. Dependent Variable: deviance

The result of the regression analysis as presented in table 2 shows that the association between workplace deviance and all predictor variables is moderately strong [ $R = .31, F(3, 280) = 10.15, p < .001$ ]. However, the coefficient table (Table 3) revealed that coreself-evaluation ( $\beta = -.28, p < .001$ ) and organizational commitment ( $\beta = -.17, p < .01$ ) were the only significant predictors of workplace deviance.

#### 7. Discussion

This study investigated the prediction of organizational commitment, occupational stress and core self-evaluation on workplace deviance among civil servants in Enugu state, Nigeria. Organizational commitment significantly predicted workplace deviance. It had a significant negative correlation

with workplace deviance. This implies that the more committed an individual is to his/her organization the less likely it is for that individual to engage in workplace deviance. This finding is in consonance with earlier findings (e.g. Banks, et al., 2012; Gills et al., 2011; Meyer & Allen 1997). Thus, the researcher rejects the first hypothesis which stated that organizational commitment does not significantly predict workplace deviance. The second hypothesis that occupational stress significantly predict workplace deviance was disconfirmed. However, this finding is not consistent with previous findings (e.g. Spector & Fox, 2005; Mitchell & Ambros, 2007; Chen & Spector, 1992). This means that employees who experience occupational stress are more likely to engage in workplace deviance. According to Spector and Fox's model of workplace deviance, perceived stressors in the workplace can lead to emotional reactions and as a result induce deviant behaviours in the organization. A possible reason for the insignificance of occupational stress in predicting workplace deviance may be located in third variable such as limited employment opportunity a country like Nigeria where the study was conducted. The uncertainty of securing another job when one is laid off due to incivility and perceived threat to the organization may be one reason why those work stress may not trigger incivility as found in other studies conducted abroad.

The third hypothesis stated that core self-evaluation does not significantly predict workplace deviance. The result indicated that core self-evaluation was negatively correlated to workplace deviance. This implies that individuals with positive core self-evaluation are less likely to engage in workplace deviance, while individuals with negative core self-evaluation are more likely to engage in workplace deviance. Dormann, et al.,(2006) found that core self-evaluation predicts job satisfaction over time. People who have positive core self-evaluation are likely to be satisfied with their job throughout the duration of their lives spent in the work environment. Also, Judge et al.,(1997) research support the relationship between core self-evaluation and job satisfaction, which suggests that people who appraise themselves positively (i.e rate themselves highly on core self-evaluation) are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs. The implication of these findings suggest that, since core self-evaluation positively predicts job satisfaction, it can also negatively predict workplace deviance in the sense that employees who are satisfied with their jobs will be less likely to engage in workplace deviance. Therefore, the researchers reject the null hypothesis which states that core self-evaluation will not significantly predict workplace deviance.

## 8. Implications of the Study

Some important implications can be drawn from the findings this study. Since it has been noted that organizational commitment and core self-evaluation predicted workplace deviance, the Nigerian government and private organizations should look for the best possible techniques to foster employee commitment in employees,

because the more committed an employee is to his/her organization, the less likely it is for the employee to engage in workplace deviance. Also, core self-evaluation tests should be included in employee recruitment processes so as to recruit employee with positive core self-evaluation. This will go a long way in curbing workplace deviance which has been shown to have serious detrimental effects on organizations, and also help organizations in reaching their objectives in an ever increasing competitive environment.

## 9. Conclusion

In conclusion, organizational commitment and coreself-evaluation have been shown to predict workplace deviance among civil servants in Enugu state, Nigeria. From the result and findings the researcher has attempted to provide explanation to these phenomenon especially within the Nigerian context. The literature review for the study was built around theories of deviance and empirical studies were cited to form the basis for the current study. The implication of the findings were discussed and it was proposed that for workplace deviance to be curbed among employees in the civil service, organizational commitment and coreself-evaluation should be taken into consideration.

## Limitation of the Study

The present study had some problems which might limit the generalizability of the results. One limitation is that data were collected from single source data (non-academic staff). Data from several sources would have been more desirable since it would eliminate or minimize common method bias. Secondly, the sample size (n= 284) is too small. Hence the study cannot be generalized to the wider populace. Finally, the study did not look into the different dimensions of organizational commitment. Thus, drawing inferences should be done with caution based on this limitations.

## Suggestion for Future Study

Future research should take into consideration large sample size that cuts across different sectors of the work force in Nigeria. Also, future research should examine the different dimensions of organizational commitment in order to get a better understanding of the variables.

Despite the limitations of this study, it is one of the first attempts to investigate the relationship between organizational commitment, occupational stress, coreself-evaluation and workplace deviance among civil servants in Enugu state, Nigeria.

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