

WORK DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR: DOES ORGANISATIONAL CAREER GROWTH PLAY A ROLE?

EZE, A.C

Department of Psychology,
Enugu State University of Science and Technology
Enugu, Nigeria.
Corresponding E-mail: adaobieze145@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The study investigated work deviant behavior and the role of organisational career growth on ninety-eight (98) non-teaching staff. Seventy-three (73) females and twenty five (25) males with the mean age of 2.57 and SD of 1.46 were selected as participants using multi-stage (cluster, simple: balloting and availability) sampling techniques from four faculties in Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT). Organizational career growth scale (Weng, 2010) and workplace deviance scale (Bennett & Robinson, 2000) were used for gathering data. Correlational design was adopted, while multiple hierarchical regression was adopted as statistic. Findings revealed that work deviant behavior dimensions independently and jointly predicted dimensions of organisational career growth. Hence, the findings were discussed in the light of social exchange theory which asserts that employees who perceive having positive career growth tend to reciprocate by not getting involved in deviant behaviours in the workplace.

Keywords: Work deviant behavior, organizational career growth

INTRODUCTION

Career growth prospects and workplace deviant behaviors are essential strategic considerations for all organizations as it is fundamental and impacts on the morale, efficiency, effectiveness and profitability of an organization. High performing organizations in dire need to survive, must increasingly pay close attention to the validity of their employee's behavior as they adhere to corporate norms, policies and procedures and must becoming equally vigilant and contributory in developing their employees in order to ensure they achieve optimum performance and growth. Workplace deviance is considered an important issue of concern for organizations as it is intended to cause harm or damage to an organization (Omar et al., 2011).

Generally, deviant workplace behavior can be described as voluntary behaviors that violate important organizational norms, including behavior aimed at the organization (e.g., intentionally arriving late and leaving early, or utilizing company resources for convenience) and other colleagues (e.g., being arrogant, rude, and insulting) (Zappalà et al., 2022). According to Tian et al., (2023) deviant workplace behavior has both constructive and destructive effects. The destructive effects refer to employees repeatedly causing huge damage to both the organization and its members to achieve personal goal (Raza et al., 2019; Bennet et al., 2018). In contrast, employees can also engage in constructive deviance that is ethical and altruistic as a means of improving corporate interests or serving others (Sharma et al., 2023). Since the former is more detrimental and is more recurrent in organizations due to incessant conflict between informal norms and formal organizational rules, employees are highly likely to violate organizational norms and engage in deviant behavior. Hence the interest in this study which is useful for identifying and satisfying the career growth needs of employees and recognizing the potential harm caused by deviant behavior which has implications for corporate management. Bennett (1995) developed four types of workplace deviant behaviour which are; production, property, political and personal aggression. Production deviance refers to behaviours such as leaving early or coming late to work without permission from the supervisors and browsing the internet for non-work related topics during working hours. Property deviance focuses on behaviours such as abusing office materials by acquiring them without consent, forgery, using organization's equipment without any authorization. The third type of deviant behaviour involves political deviance which applies to

behaviors such as gossiping and spreading rumours at the workplace. Last but not least, personal aggression comprises behaviours such as making rude statements, harassing other employees and being disrespectful to supervisors. With these types of deviance, negative consequences are imminent as organizations stand to lose millions of resources through employees' theft and sabotages, employees who are targets of workplace deviance are likely forced to quit, suffer stress-related problems and reduced wellbeing, have decreased productivity, low morale, and lose work time (O'Leary-Kelly, 2018). In the attempt to understand and explain workplace deviance, extant researchers have identified various factors that might influence employee deviance (Kura, Shamsudin & Chauhan 2013). These include factors such as perceived organizational support

(Ferris, Brown & Heller 2009), organizational justice perceptions (Galperin 2002; Devonish & Greenidge, 2010), organizational politics (Davis & Gardner 2004; Bashir et al. 2011), leadership style (Chullen et al. 2010), psychological contract breach (Kickul et al. 2001) and career development practices (Nwuche et al., 2015).

Thus, for any organization to prosper in an increasingly competitive global market, devoid of employees' deviant behaviours, organizational career growth of its employees is paramount since human capital is the greatest asset of an organization.

Weng (2020) defined organizational career growth as the degree to which employee's perceive that their current organization creates an environment in which the employees' are able to meet their career related needs and reinforces those accomplishments through promotions and compensation. Career growth is the lifelong process of managing progression in learning and work. The quality of this process significantly determines the nature and quality of individuals' lives: the kind of people they become, their sense of purpose, income at their disposal as well as attitude towards work and the organization (Kanter & Mirvis, 2021). Hence, there is a need for every organization to invest in comprehensive career-growth process which helps attract and retain high-performing employees (Garavan, Morley, Gunnigle, & Collins, 2018; Lesabe & Nkosi, 2019). It is indeed vital to instill a mindset of continuous improvement through learning and enhancement leading to employee satisfaction with optimum opportunities for career growth (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2020). Since career growth holds out the possibility of growing critical skills within the organisation, with an improved ability to attract good people and possibly retain them, an improved flexibility in the workforce and ability to respond to competitive changes becomes attractive to organizations since all is geared towards enhanced productivity. From the above statements, it is pertinent to note that career growth is significant to this study as it provides employees opportunity for long term success, higher pay, job security and job satisfaction and these brings about a decline in deviant behavior tendencies. This study is anchored on social exchange theory Blau (1964) as it asserts that every behavior is motivated by a cost-benefit analysis. In the workplace, employees often tend to seek out rewards and minimize costs as well as expect a give and take scenario. Failure of the organization to recognize and reward merits will result in dissatisfaction which may cause employees to become retaliative on the organization leading to workplace deviance. Hence, workplace deviance resulting from experiences at work, could be seen as a form of negative reciprocity, a tit for tat situation especially when organizations sit on the career growth prospects of its employees.

Most studies linking career growth and deviant behaviour have therefore shown some association. For example, Ahmadi et al., (2022) engaged in the meta-analysis of organisational deviant behaviours research: Past, present, and future and found several practices linking to workplace deviance.

Adeoti et al., (2021) investigated opportunity, job pressure and deviant workplace behavior and the mediating role of neutralisation among faculty members in public universities in Nigeria and found that opportunities created through ethical climate and institutional policy leads to workplace deviance. Rahim (2020) in his research on “organizational career growth and deviant behaviour: An analytical study of Pakistan Banks” found very high level of deviant behaviour in bank employees. Sunil and Rooprai (2019) explored the measurement of organizational career growth as a predictor of deviant behaviour and anxiety. Results indicate that there was a significant relationship between organizational career growth, deviant behaviour and anxiety. Nwuche & Eketu (2015) investigated the relationship between some career development (CD) practices and the incidence of destructive workplace deviance. Their findings pointed to the fact that organisations who engage in career development practices were associated with reduction in organisational deviance. Osibanjo et al., (2015) examined workplace deviant behaviours and its implication on organisational performance in a growing economy and found adverse effect on job performance.

From the aforementioned, there is recurrent dearth of research among non-teaching members of tertiary institutions especially in developing countries such as Nigeria where economic recession has contributed immensely to inconsistencies recorded in appraisal exercises especially among government owned tertiary institutions. Hence, this study hypothesized that organizational career growth will significantly predict deviant behavior among non-teaching staff members.

METHOD

Participants

Participants in this study comprised ninety-eight (98) non-teaching staff with seventy three (73) females and twenty five (25) males with the mean age of 2.57 and SD of 1.46 were selected as participants using multi-stage (cluster, simple: balloting & availability) sampling techniques from four faculties (Management Sciences, Applied Natural Sciences, Environmental sciences, & Law) in Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT).

Instrument

The participants completed two sets of inventory namely: The workplace deviance scale and Organizational career growth 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). 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 items include: “I come in late to work without permission,” and “I usually curse people at work. Robinson and Benett (1995) reported an internal reliability of 0.81, while a Cronbach’s alpha of .89 was obtained for the present study.

Organizational career growth

Organizational career growth scale is a 15-item instrument developed by Weng (2010) to measure the four dimensions of organizational career growth. This measure asks subjects to assess their career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed, and remuneration growth. Sample items include “my present job moves me closer to my career goals,” “my promotion speed in my present organization is fast,” The developer obtained a coefficient alpha for career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed and remuneration

growth being .85, .86, .86, .80 and .78, while a Cronbach alpha of .983, .960, .981, and .984 were obtained respectively.

Procedure

The researchers adopted multi-stage sampling involving cluster, simple random and availability sampling. Four faculties were selected from Enugu State University of Science & Technology using cluster sampling. The researcher visited the four Faculties with an approval letter obtained from the ethical board of the institution indicating the purpose and essence of the study. With the aid of research assistants, non-teaching members who indicated their willingness to participate in the study were selected. They were subsequently handed a survey that comprises measures of workplace deviance and organizational career growth to complete. The researcher assured them of confidentiality through the instructions and encouraged them to be honest in their responses that the data were meant for research purposes only. A total of one hundred and fifteen (115) copies of questionnaire were distributed, one hundred and six (106) copies were retrieved of which three (8) were discarded, due to improper filling. Thus, a total of ninety-eight (98) copies of the questionnaire were eventually used for data analysis.

Design/Statistics

Correlational design was adopted while hierarchical multiple regression was used as statistical test for data analyses.

RESULT

Table 1: descriptive statistics

S/N	Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Career growth	16.7143	3.14266	1.000	.673	.186	.223	-.204	-.786	.136	.115
2	Professional ability	17.7143	2.58863		1.000	.166	.281	-.006	-.488	.188	-.205
3	Promotion speed	14.1429	3.28696			1.000	.557	.015	-.205	.233	-.123
4	Remuneration growth	8.2143	2.66420				1.000	.120	-.120	-.142	-.218
5	Interpersonal deviant	13.0000	4.51115					1.000	.610	-.038	-.154
6	Organisational deviant	19.5714	8.25995						1.000	-.097	-.075
7	Age	1.8571	1.25180							1.000	-.311
8	Gender	2.5714	1.45730								1.000

Table 1 above shows that career growth of organisational career growth and organisational deviant of work behaviour deviant are negatively related at $r = -.8(r = -.786)$, this means that they cannot meet at the same time, the presence of one will lead to the absence of the other one. Also career growth and interpersonal deviant shows a none negative correlation at $r = -.2(r = -.204)$. this

shows though they are not correlated, still they are not compatible, the increase in one will cause the absence of the other one. Career growth and professional ability both of organisational career growth correlated, this means that the increase in on will cause the increase in the other one.

Table 1 above shows that professional growth of organisational career growth and organisational deviant of work deviant behaviour indicated a negative relationship at $r = -.5$ ($r = -.488$), this means that both variables are not compatible; the increase of professional growth will cause the decrease in organisational deviant. Professional growth and interpersonal deviant shows a none negative correlation at $r = -.0$ ($r = -.006$), this implies that though are not related but they cannot still be together, the presence of one will cause the absence of the other.

The table 1 above shows that promotion speed of organisational career growth and interpersonal deviant of work deviant indicated a negative no correlation at $r = -.2$ ($r = -.205$), this means that even though both are not related, the presence of one can cause the absence of the other. Promotion speed and gender also shows negative no correlation at $r = -.1$ ($r = -.123$), this means both variable are not compatible even when they are not related, the presence of one might lead to the absence of the other one.

Table 2: regression statistics

	Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	UnSt	St	t	Sig.
Career growth	1	.860	.739	.733				.000
Professional ability	1	.612 ^a	.374	.361				.000
Promotion speed	1	.270 ^a	.073	.054				.027
Remuneration growth	1	.272 ^a	.074	.055				.026
Career growth	Interpersonal deviant				.306	.439	6.642	.000
	Organisational deviant				-.401	-1.054	-15.932	.000
Professional ability	Interpersonal deviant				.267	.465	4.537	.000
	Organisational deviant				-.242	-.772	-7.536	.000
Promotion speed	Interpersonal deviant				.162	.222	1.785	.077
	Organisational deviant				-.136	-.341	-2.734	.007
Remuneration growth	Interpersonal deviant				.182	.308	2.474	.015
	Organisational deviant				-.099	-.308	-2.476	.015
Career growth	2	.871 ^b	.758	.747				.031
Professional ability	2	.646 ^b	.417	.392				.036
Promotion speed	2	.346 ^b	.120	.082				.091
Remuneration growth	2	.410 ^b	.168	.133				.007
Career growth	Age				.238	.095	1.753	.083
	Gender				.293	.136	2.495	.014
Professional ability	Age				.161	.078	.926	.357
	Gender				-.304	-.171	-2.026	.046
Promotion speed	Age				.508	.193	1.873	.064
	Gender				-.123	-.055	-.526	.600
Remuneration growth	Age				-.533	-.251	-2.497	.014
	gender				-.510	-.279	-2.763	.007

Dependent variable= organisational career growth (career growth, professional ability, promotion speed, remuneration growth), at $p < .001$, .01, .05. R= relationship, R²= relationship square, UnSt= unstandardised, St= standardised

Table 2 above shows that work deviant behaviour independently and jointly predicted career growth of organisational career growth at sig. value of .000 which is below the threshold of at $p < .001$. The table indicated a negative prediction between organisational deviant and career growth; this implies that the presence of organizational deviance will cause the absence of career growth, while the presence of interpersonal deviant will cause the presence of career growth. Work place deviant behaviour shows a strong relationship with career growth at $r = .9$ ($r = .860$) and both dimensions contributed 74% variance to career growth at $r^2 = .739$.

Table 2 shows that work place deviant behaviour jointly and independently predicts professional ability with sig. value of .000 each which is lower than the benchmark of at $p < .001$. Organisational deviant and professional ability indicated a negative interaction, this means that they are not compatible; the presence of one will lead to the absence of the other one, while interpersonal deviant and professional ability are compatible, the presence of one will cause the presence of the other one. Interpersonal and organisational deviant behaviour shows a correlation with professional ability at $r = .6$ ($r = .612$), they both contribute 37% variation to professional ability at $r^2 = .374$.

Table 2 above shows that only organisational deviant behaviour significantly predicted promotional career at sig. .007 which is lower than the limited value of at $p < .01$, also a negative interaction was indicated, which means both variable cannot meet at same time, the absence one will cause the presence of the other one. While interpersonal deviant behaviour did not predict promotional career at sig. .077 which is more than the value of at $p < .05$. Work deviant behaviour jointly predicted promotion career growth at sig. .027, interpersonal and organisational deviant behaviour did not correlate with promotional growth at $r = .3$ ($r = .270$) and both dimensions contributed 7% variation to promotion career at $r^2 = .073$.

Finally, interpersonal at sig. .015 and organisational at sig. .015 deviant behaviour independently and jointly at sig. .025 predicted remuneration growth. Organisational deviant behaviour indicated a negative interaction with remuneration growth; this implies that the presence of organisational deviant will cause the absence of remuneration growth, and also interpersonal deviant and remuneration growth are compatible, the increase in one will cause the increase in the other one. Both dimensions are not related to remuneration growth at $r = .3$ ($r = .272$), they both contribute 7% variance to remuneration growth at $r^2 = .074$.

DISCUSSION

The study investigated organizational career growth as a predictor of work deviant behaviour among non-teaching staff of Enugu State University of Science & Technology. Findings showed that organizational career growth dimension negatively predicted organizational deviance. This implies that employees who get involved in production deviance such as intentionally working slowly or wasting resources and property deviance such as making photocopies at work for personal use/stealing often times do not experience career growth in the organization.

Another finding indicates that organizational career growth positively predicted workplace deviance (interpersonal) This finding implies that gossiping about others, showing favouritism, verbal abuse and all sorts of harassment enable individuals aspire to progress steadily in organizations where they work. This study is not in line with Chernyaketai & Tziner, (2014) who found that the higher the career prospects the less likely individuals engage in deviant behaviour.

Further analysis on the dimensions of both variables reveals that professional ability dimension of career growth negatively predicted organizational deviance. This result shows that as perception of professional ability and development increases the lower the tendencies to engage in organizational deviance and this is in accordance with the findings of Ramesar et al., (2019).

As expected, finding also showed that promotional and remuneration career growth dimension negatively predicted organizational deviant behaviour. This finding is in line with Zealzey and Wood (2016) and it implies that organizations that offer favourable framework for benefits and career development prospects motivates a strong involvement in the organizational process thereby reducing deviant behaviour tendencies.

In addition, the results of the study also revealed that remuneration and professional ability dimensions of career growth positively predicted interpersonal deviance. This finding suggests that the more likely employees enjoy money or reward given for a service rendered in the workplace as well as express efficacy in professional ability the more they are likely to engage in interpersonal deviance with minor consequences such as gossiping about co-workers or management or getting involved in personal aggression such as abuse and harassment. This study is not totally in agreement with findings by Nwuche & Eketu (2015) who assumed that career development practices reduce workplace deviance but is commiserate with the assumptions of social exchange theory which suggests that a detachment and lack of commitment to the organization is imminent once employee career growth needs are not met leading to deviant behaviour in the workplace.

Implications of findings

Deviant behaviour in the workplace has become an issue of concern in human resource management in organisations and therefore requires adequate attention. The following are therefore suggested as strategic tools to reduce the incidence of workplace deviance in various organisations in line with global best practices: Based on some of the findings of this study, deviant behaviour will reduce if employees' career growth prospects and opportunities are not taken for granted, considering that workers come to work with expectations and needs they want to satisfy through their work efforts. Obisi (2003), asserts that adequate salary, good working atmosphere, job security, professional competence, recognition of achievement, positive and supportive environment and supportive organisational culture, opportunity for growth as well as industrial harmony influence employees' satisfaction and commitment to organizations. Therefore, management of tertiary institutions must ensure everything humanly possible is done to motivate their employees through career growth opportunities in order to earn their commitment and support which will serve as a strategy towards reducing deviant behaviour in the workplace.

Further, given that the behaviour of people in organizations is influenced by inter relationships with a complexity of variables (Mullins 2013), not giving due consideration to contextual variables is an acknowledgeable short coming of the study and the results need to be handled with some caution as more rigorous investigation is required. In, addition, deviance has been measured by reliance on self-report and the bias inherent in this method must also be acknowledged. In spite of the limitations, the findings of the study do give credence to the view that career growth practices would influence deviance at work. However, university management may inadvertently be legitimating destructive deviance by not paying sufficient attention to employees need to advance in career. As it is apparent, the contribution of career growth prospects to reduction of deviance may be enhanced by always ensuring that the real needs of employees are taken into cognizance and that there is fairness in the reward system. Finally, the results of the study appear to suggest that for a given organisation, what career growth dimensions to emphasize on and give attention to would be dependent on what deviant behaviour that needs to be addressed.

Conclusion

To ignore the career needs of an organizations workforce as well as deviant workplace behaviour is to allow the erosion of organisational standards, regulations and norms to deteriorate. As the present study has demonstrated, deviant behaviour may not be exhibited when the organisation is perceived to work towards enhancing employee growth opportunities. However, more research needs to be carried out to support the finding further and by considering other institutional and work-related factors so that a better understanding of the phenomenon and the implementation of preventive measures can be adopted.

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