AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.13 (3), September-December, 2024 https://ajemates.org

A PROPOSED MODEL ON THE ROLE OF AUTHORITARIAN LEADERSHIP IN MITIGATING DEVIANT WORKPLACE BEHAVIOUR AMONG THE NIGERIAN ACADEMICS

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ABSTRACT

Deviant workplace behaviour is a phenomenon that adversely affects organizations globally. However, its proportions and prevalence among Nigerian academics at higher institutions, notably the reprehensible practice known as 'sex for grades,' are especially concerning and a global disgrace. Notwithstanding the heightened knowledge and societal apprehensions over the frequency of this deviant behaviour, research on its roots and repercussions remains disturbingly scarce. This article, based on the principles of General Deterrent Theory and existing literature, provides a testable model that demonstrates a negative relationship between authoritarian leadership and deviant workplace behaviour among Nigerian academics. The paper proposes deterrence elements as a moderating variable in the model. In contrast to earlier studies, this research comprehensively integrates all deterrent factors in its proposed hypotheses. The suggested model will enhance the existing literature on human resource management and organizational behaviour by introducing a testable moderation model. It offers a distinctive chance for school management to use an effective leadership style and disciplinary procedures to reduce staff misbehaviour. Ultimately, the article will offer recommendations and proposals for subsequent research.

Keywords: Deviant Workplace Behaviour, Deterrence, Punishment Certainty, Punishment Severity, Punishment Celerity, Authoritarian leadership style

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Introduction

The occurrence of deviant workplace behaviour presents a considerable concern for organisations worldwide (Bodla et al., 2019; Ibrahim et al., 2022; Kura et al., 2014). Deviant workplace behaviour is defined using empirical terminology. This phenomenon has been referred to as "counterproductive behaviour" (Baysal et al., 2020), "antisocial behaviour" (Aquino & Douglas, 2003), "insidious behaviour" (Greenberg, 2010), "dysfunctional behaviour" (Kumasey & Hossain, 2020), "organisational misbehaviour" (Brooks, 2012), and "workplace incivility" (Cingöz & Kaplan, 2015). The variations in language indicate the writers' conceptualisations regarding focus and scope. According to many authors Deviant workplace behaviour is a multidimensional construct that includes various voluntary employee actions that contravene important organisational norms and pose risks to the welfare of the organisation or its members (Emmanuel et al., 2020; ; Fagbohungbe et al., 2012; Imonikhe et al., 2011; Metofe, 2017; Noah, 2008;). These behaviours can be classified into two main categories: organisational deviance and interpersonal deviance. Organisational deviance encompasses actions detrimental to the organisation, including theft, fraud, sabotage, and tardiness. In contrast, interpersonal deviance refers to behaviours that negatively impact other individuals within the organisation, such as sexual harassment, verbal abuse, and physical aggression (Ibrahim et al., 2022). Organisational deviance adversely affects organisations (Lugosi, 2019; Sharma et al., 2014). For instance, fraud and employee theft represent prevalent issues in the Western world, with the associated financial burden on businesses amounting to trillions of dollars each year (Weber et al., 2003; Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE), 2016; Tanyolac, 2020). Interpersonal deviance is also detrimental to an organisation (Appelbaum et al., 2007; Michalak & Ashkanasy, 2020).

Incidents of sexual harassment in the workplace are notably concerning (Acquadro et al., 2022). Surveys within the United Kingdom hotel industry indicate that 89 percent of respondents reported experiencing one or more incidents of sexual harassment. Furthermore, 66 percent of female restaurant employees and over half of male restaurant employees reported being sexually harassed by supervisors (Ineson et al., 2013). Recent studies on deviant workplace behaviour in Nigerian literature have illuminated the global issue of employee misconduct (Oyeoku et al., 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2022). Sexual harassment, referred to as "sex for a grade," represents a significant problem in Nigerian campuses. Most media coverage and academic research on these incidents predominantly examine faculty members (Fadipe & Bakenne, 2020; Joseph, 2015). The primary factors contributing to deviant workplace behaviour in Nigeria and potential solutions necessitate thorough academic investigation. This paper utilises deterrence theory to propose a testable model that investigates the impact of authoritarian leadership on deviant workplace behaviour among Nigerian academics, incorporating deterrence effects as a moderating variable.

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Literature Review

Deviant Workplace Behaviour

Deviant workplace behaviour includes various voluntary actions by employees that breach important organisational norms and jeopardise the welfare of the organisation or its members (D'Silva et al., 2020; Fagbohungbe et al., 2012; Stefano et al., 2017). Workplace deviant conduct is characterised by varying definitions among scholars. Weitz et al. (2012) define it as intentional actions in the workplace that breach regulations pertaining to such behaviours. Gruys and Sackett (2003) define Workplace deviant conduct as any intentional action by an organisational member that opposes the legitimate interests of the organisation. Robinson and Bennett (1995) define workplace deviance as voluntary behaviour that contravenes important organisational standards, thereby jeopardising the welfare of the organisation, its employees, or both (p. 556). Workplace deviant behaviours can be categorised into two main types: organisational deviance and interpersonal deviance. Organisational deviance encompasses actions that intentionally damage an organisation, including theft, sabotage, tardiness, and the withholding of effort. Interpersonal deviance encompasses behaviours that inflict harm on other individuals within the organisation, including sexual harassment, verbal abuse, and physical aggression. Robinson and Bennett (1995) categorise deviant workplace behaviour as varying from minor to primary levels. The severity of deviant behaviour is assessed based on its potential to cause harm to the organisation or its members. Minor forms of deviant behaviour encompass cyberloafing and unjustified absenteeism, while more serious forms include physical aggression and theft (Dumazert & Plane, 2012; Lugosi, 2019; Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Workplace deviance is categorised into four types: production deviance, property deviance, political deviance, and personal aggression, based on the target and severity dimensions (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Organisational deviance includes production and property deviance, with political deviance and personal aggression contributing to interpersonal deviance (Lugosi, 2019; Tanyolaç, 2020). Jeewandara and Kumari (2021) differentiate deviant workplace behaviour from unethical workplace behaviour. Unethical behaviour is defined as actions that contravene a society's established laws, regulations, and standards through inappropriate conduct or wrongdoing. The term "deviant workplace behaviour" denotes actions that violate the established rules, ethics, or norms of the respective organisation. Discharging waste pipelines into a river is an unethical practice; however, if the organization's environmental policy allows it, it does not constitute deviance. Nonetheless, if the organization's standards forbid the disposal of waste into waterways, such a practice is deemed unethical and deviant (Jeewandara & Kumari, 2021).

Authoritarian Leadership Style

An authoritarian leadership style is characterised by leaders exerting control and dominance over subordinates. This is marked by excessive control, command-and-control decision-making, and restricted autonomy for subordinates (D'Silva et al., 2020). Authoritarian leaders typically make decisions independently, with minimal input from

followers. They implement strict rules and regulations, prioritising obedience and compliance over empowerment and autonomy (Öcel, 2018). Harms et al. (2017) define authoritarian leadership as a leader's behaviour characterised by exerting strong control over subordinates and demanding their unconditional obedience. Authoritarian leadership is characterised by the absolute dominance of leaders (Bodla et al., 2019). Authoritarian leaders tend to impose control through the establishment of rules and the use of punitive measures for noncompliance. They frequently enforce stringent discipline on subordinates' work and demonstrate their authority in decision-making (Qi et al., 2020). Leaders who adopt an authoritarian approach require subordinates to comply with requests without dissent, potentially leading to negative emotions towards the leaders. This dynamic may subsequently inhibit counterproductive work behaviours (Zheng et al., 2020). Qi et al. (2020) describes authoritarian leadership as a two-dimensional construct comprising dominant and authoritarian dimensions. The dominant dimension refers to the manner in which leaders exercise their authority and control over subordinates by issuing directives, requiring obedience and compliance, and promoting conformity through the use of punishment and rewards. The authoritarian dimension pertains to leaders' tendencies to make unilateral decisions and compel subordinates to accept these decisions without consultation or the allowance for dissent (Harms et al., 2017).

Theoretical Framework and Propositions

Underpinning Theory

This study uses deterrence theory (Gibbs, 1968) to underpin the proposed model. Deterrence theory as elucidated by D'Arcy and Herath (2011) and Hollinger and Clark (1983), posits that individuals act rationally, assessing the costs and benefits of their actions, and will only partake in deviant behaviour if the expected benefits surpass the potential costs. This concept has been effectively applied to analyse different forms of deviance, including that occurring in the workplace. Deterrence theory posits that in the realm of workplace deviance, the likelihood of employees engaging in deviant behaviours diminishes when they perceive a significant probability of detection and severe consequences. Based on the deterrence effects in criminology, existing organisational control literature examines the efficacy of sanction mechanisms in preventing deviant behaviour among employees (Pogarsky & Piquero, 2004; Zheng et al., 2020). The deterrence perspective posits that individuals make rational choices regarding criminal behaviour by weighing potential gains against associated costs (Gibbs, 1968). The fundamental premise of the theory posits that potential offenders possess sufficient rationality to be influenced by their comprehension of the consequences of their actions. Classic deterrence emphasises formal legal sanctions, positing that increased perceived certainty, severity, and expediency of sanctions for illicit behaviour effectively discourages individuals from engaging in such acts (Gibbs, 1968; R. C. Hollinger & Clark, 1983). D'Arcy and Herath (2011)

characterise sanctions by their certainty (likelihood), severity (intensity), and celerity (speed) of administration. The deterrent concept posits that individuals are dissuaded from criminal behaviour when they expect detection and punishment (certainty), anticipate severe penalties (severity), and foresee prompt punishment (celerity) (Buckenmaier et al., 2021; Nagin, (2013).

This study utilises deterrence theory to suggest that authoritarian leadership may effectively deter deviant behaviour among employees in the workplace. Deterrence theory posits that the potential for punishment from a dominant authority can inhibit individuals from partaking in undesirable behaviours. Deterrence theory asserts that the probability of deviant behaviour diminishes with heightened severity and certainty of punishment. Authoritarian leaders, due to their complete control and authority, can create a credible threat of punishment for deviant acts, thus deterring subordinates from such behaviours. Authoritarian leaders frequently employ coercion, threats, and punishment to enforce compliance and obedience among their subordinates, effectively deterring deviant behaviour.

Authoritarian Leadership and Deviant Workplace Behaviour

Leadership is recognised as a significant factor affecting employee deviance (Ibrahim et al., 2022). Theory and research indicate that leaders can directly mitigate deviant behaviour among employees by implementing sanctions and reinforcing discipline (Hollinger & Clark, 1982; Podsakoff et al., 2005). There is a notable lack of understanding regarding the leadership role in mitigating employee deviance. To enhance our comprehension of this leadership role, we utilise deterrence theory to suggest a functional utility of leader behaviour (e.g., authoritarian leadership) in mitigating employee workplace deviance and identifying potential reinforcers. Authoritarian leadership represents a management approach defined by stringent control and oversight, an emphasis on adherence to established rules and regulations, and a propensity for employing punitive actions to deter undesirable conduct. Previous studies have consistently demonstrated a negative correlation between authoritarian leadership and deviant workplace behaviour (Bodla et al., 2019; Zheng et al., 2020). Authoritarian leadership, defined by its focus on control, discipline, and punitive measures, may act as a deterrent to deviant behaviours among employees. Jiang et al. (2017) assert that authoritarian leaders closely observe their subordinates' behaviours, promptly detect and penalise any indications of deviance, and exhibit a readiness to enforce harsh repercussions for non-compliance. Authoritarian leaders can effectively deter employees from engaging in deviant behaviours that may harm the organisation or its members by fostering an environment characterised by fear and the threat of punishment (Zheng et al., 2020).

Authoritarian leaders may swiftly and severely penalise employees who exhibit production deviance, including intentional slow work or substandard output, as well as property deviance, such as theft or damage to organisational assets. The credible threat of punishment under

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authoritarian leadership may dissuade employees from engaging in such behaviours. Authoritarian leaders may deter employees from engaging in deviant workplace behaviours by establishing a culture of fear and coercion (Zheng et al., 2020). In light of these considerations, we propose the following propositions:

Proposition 1: *Authoritarian leadership behaviour will be negatively related to employee deviant workplace behaviour.*

The Moderating Role of Deterrence Effects

The general deterrence theory, rooted in classical criminology, posits that individuals engage in rational decision-making regarding criminal behaviour by assessing the potential benefits in relation to the associated costs (D'Arcy & Herath, 2011). Increased perceived costs of a crime correlates with a decreased likelihood of engagement in such behaviour. Miller and Anderson (1986) identify three primary factors that influence the effectiveness of general deterrence, commonly known as the "3 Cs": Sanction Certainty denotes the probability of apprehension and subsequent punishment for the offence. A greater perceived certainty of punishment correlates with a more pronounced deterrent effect (Nagin, 2013). Punishment severity denotes the intensity of the punitive measures imposed. There is a prevailing belief that increased severity of punishment correlates with a greater deterrent effect on crime. Research on the effectiveness of severity alone presents mixed findings (Apel & Nagin, 2015).

Punishment Celerity on the other hand denotes the temporal proximity between the commission of a crime and the imposition of a punishment. Timeliness in administering punishment is believed to enhance its effectiveness in deterring future criminal behaviour (D'Arcy & Herath, 2011). Authoritarian leadership is empirically recognised for its deterrent effects, characterised by a strong emphasis on rigid discipline, reinforcement of obedience, and the application of punitive measures to regulate subordinates' behaviour (Bodla et al., 2019; Osborne et al., 2023). Literature indicates that the efficacy of authoritarian leadership in mitigating deviant behaviour may be contingent upon the robustness of deterrent effects, including the perceived probability of detection, the severity of punishment, and the promptness of sanction application (Bodla et al., 2019; Wang & Guan, 2018). Strong deterrence effects may enhance the effectiveness of authoritarian leadership in mitigating deviant workplace behaviour. In contrast, when deterrence effects are weak, authoritarian leadership may prove less effective in curbing deviant behaviours, as subordinates might not view the threat of punishment as credible (Jiang et al., 2017).

Increased deterrence effects, marked by a heightened perception of the likelihood and severity of punishment for deviant acts, are expected to strengthen the negative correlation between authoritarian leadership and deviant workplace behaviour. Employees are less likely to engage in deviant behaviours when they perceive a high risk of detection and severe punishment under authoritarian leadership (Zheng et al., 2020). In these instances, employees may exhibit a higher propensity for deviant behaviour, even in the presence of authoritarian leadership, as the perceived threat of punishment may

lack credibility or severity sufficient to inhibit such actions. We propose that the deterrence effects of authoritarian leadership, specifically punishment certainty, punishment severity, and punishment celerity, will moderate the relationship between authoritarian leadership and employee deviance. Therefore, in light of these considerations, we propose the following:

Proposition 2*: The strength of the negative relationship between authoritarian leadership and deviant workplace behaviour will be stronger when employees perceive a higher likelihood that they will be detected and punished for their deviant acts.*

Proposition 3*: The strength of the negative relationship between authoritarian leadership and deviant workplace behaviour will be stronger when employees perceive the punishment for deviant acts to be more severe.*

Proposition 4*: The strength of the negative relationship between authoritarian leadership and deviant workplace behaviour will be stronger when employees perceive that the punishment for deviant acts will be applied more quickly.*

The conceptual model presented demonstrates how deterrence elements moderate the relationship between authoritarian leadership and deviant workplace behaviour. Figure 1 illustrates that the authoritarian leadership style employed by an organisation seeks to mitigate deviant workplace behaviour in campus settings. Control mechanisms, particularly deterrent elements encompassing punishment certainty, punishment severity, and punishment celerity (Buckenmaier et al., 2021; Apel & Nagin, 2015), are expected to enhance the mitigating effects of authoritarian leadership on deviant workplace behaviour within an organisation. It is posited that authoritarian leadership style alone is inadequate for controlling the deviant workplace behaviour. Hence, the effectiveness of authoritarian leadership in mitigating deviant workplace behaviour depends on the degree of deterrence measures implemented within the organisation.

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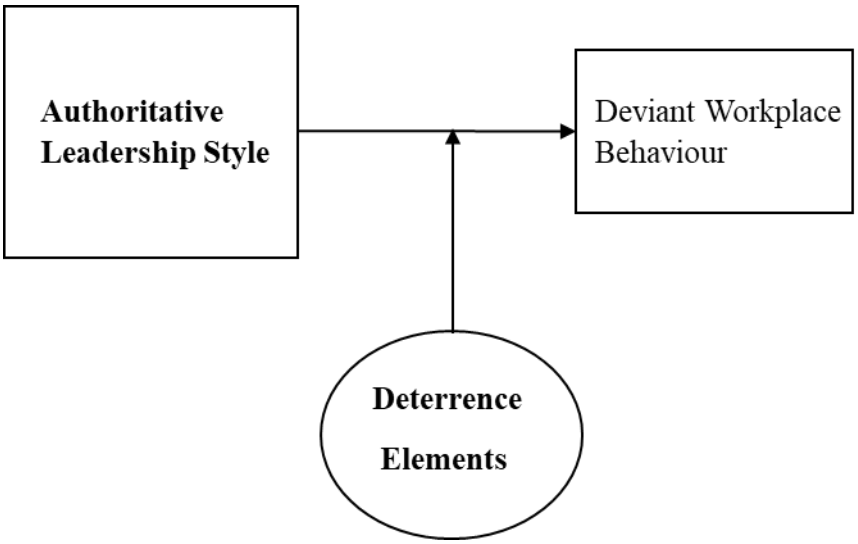


Figure 1: Proposed research Model

Methodology

This paper examines existing literature on deviant workplace behaviour. The paper presents a conceptual framework that connects authoritarian leadership style to deviant workplace behaviour, drawing from a systematic review of the literature and an analysis of deterrent theory, while highlighting the role of deterrent factors as moderators. This study proposes employing a quantitative survey method aimed at academics as the target respondents to evaluate the hypothesis. Subsequently, PLS-SEM may be employed to examine the data.

Findings

This research posits that authoritarian leadership adversely affects deviant workplace behaviours, based on general deterrence theory and prior literature. The association is especially evident in schools when leadership utilises all deterrent characteristics as a control tool.

Discussion

Deviant workplace behaviour, characterised as voluntary actions by employees that inflict damage upon an organisation and its representatives, has posed a significant challenge for numerous organisations across the globe. This issue necessitates extensive scholarly inquiry due to its widespread presence in corporate environments and its detrimental effects on both the economy and social structures (Tanyolac, 2020). In Nigeria, recent investigations and daily media reports have highlighted the troubling phenomenon of academicians participating in sexual harassment referred to as "Sex for grades," alongside issues such as habitual absenteeism, prolonged semester breaks, exploitation of students, academic dishonesty, misappropriation of funds intended for conferences, seminars, and research, among various other unethical practices (Emmanuel et al., 2020; Ibrahim et al., 2022). In light of the growing body of evidence indicating a rise in deviant behaviours within professional settings, it

is noteworthy that the existing literature has largely overlooked the phenomenon of workplace deviance specifically among academics.

This research illustrates the possible advantages of authoritarian leadership in mitigating deviant behaviours in academic settings by employing a deterrence mechanism. This research builds upon earlier investigations into the influence of leadership on employee deviance, emphasising the deterrent effect of authoritarian leadership rather than merely addressing the adverse outcomes associated with this leadership approach. The proposed model posits that authoritarian leaders can successfully dissuade academics from engaging in deviant behaviours through the implementation of a robust deterrence system, defined by the perceived certainty, severity, and promptness of sanctions. The paper posits that authoritarian leadership, when integrated with a strong deterrence framework, may function as a potent mechanism for regulating deviant behaviours within academic environments. In light of the preceding discussion, this paper presents a series of theoretical and managerial implications, alongside prospective directions for future research endeavours.

Theoretical Implications

This research enriches the discourse on leadership and deviance by introducing a deterrence-based framework that elucidates the efficacy of authoritarian leadership in regulating deviant behaviour within academic settings. This enhances our comprehension of the leadership function in mitigating deviant behaviours in the workplace by emphasising the possibility that authoritarian leadership may act as a deterrent, rather than merely concentrating on its adverse effects. This research presents a multitude of theoretical implications. Initially, we enhance the discourse surrounding workplace deviance by establishing a connection with deterrence theory. We formulated a hypothesis and provided evidence that leaders possess the capacity to inhibit deviant behaviours among employees in the workplace. While prior studies have highlighted the considerable effect of positive leadership styles in mitigating employee deviance via the social exchange process (Zheng et al., 2020), this research represents a novel approach, as the authors theorise the impact of authoritarian leadership on employee deviance through a deterrence lens. We illustrate that a leadership approach characterised by authoritarian principles, which prioritises strict discipline and unwavering compliance from employees, serves as a deterrent that diminishes instances of employee deviance. Furthermore, by incorporating deterrence as a moderating variable within our model, our research elucidates the distinctive function of the deterrence process in clarifying the mechanisms through which authoritarian leadership influences organisational deviance.

Managerial implication

The research offers valuable perspectives for higher education administrators and policymakers regarding the effective management of deviant workplace behaviours within academic settings. The proposed model advocates for school authorities to contemplate the adoption of an authoritarian leadership style, in

conjunction with a strong deterrence system, to discourage academics from partaking in deviant behaviours. Moreover, the suggested framework indicates that educational administrators ought to formulate explicit policies and procedures delineating the possible sanctions or penalties for participation in deviant behaviours, ensuring that these measures are applied consistently and promptly.

Future Research

Subsequent investigations may rigorously examine the proposed model to substantiate the hypothesised relationships. Scholars may further investigate additional potential moderating or mediating variables that could affect the dynamics between authoritarian leadership and deviant behaviours within the workplace.

Limitation

The proposed model constitutes a conceptual framework derived from an extensive review of the literature and pertinent theoretical underpinnings. Consequently, subsequent research endeavours ought to seek empirical validation of the suggested correlations and substantiate the proposed framework, particularly in developing nations such as Nigeria, where instances of workplace deviant behaviour are prevalent. Future empirical investigations are essential to substantiate the proposed relationships.

Conclusion

In summary, the research presents a framework that underscores the possible inhibitory function of authoritarian leadership in reducing deviant behaviours within academic settings. The model posits that authoritarian leadership, when integrated with a strong deterrence framework, may function as a potent mechanism for regulating deviant behaviours within academic institutions. This study enhances our comprehension of how specific leadership styles, once deemed harmful, may in fact fulfil a constructive role in organisational environments marked by prevalent workplace deviance, through the lens of deterrence theory.

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