The Role of Organisational Culture and Situational Factors in Predicting Workplace Deviation Among Public Employees

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study examined the influence of situational factors on organisational deviance and how organisational culture could mediate these factors among public employees.

Aims(s) – The study aimed to identify predictors of workplace deviant behaviour in the public service and the mediatory roles of organisational cultures in these predictors.

Design/methodology/approach – The study employed a quantitative approach using a cross-sectional survey design to collect data from 430 participants; the analysis included regression analysis and structural equation modelling to examine the mediating effect of organisational culture.

Findings – The results of the structural equation modelling adopted in the data analysis revealed that injustice, stress, and lack of support were responsible for the increased observed organisational behaviour. The result also revealed that perceived organisational injustice and work stress levels significantly predict deviant behaviour among the studied group, while the organisation's culture mediated the influence of justice and stress predictor variables.

Limitations of the study – The study outcome may not be free of sampling error and non-response error due to self-reported surveys that could be subject to bias. The sample may be limited to public service, thus limiting the generalisation of the findings to other sectors.

Practical implications and Originality/value – The study contributes to the literature on the mediating role of organisational culture in deviant work behaviour. It also shows how the organisational culture could be used to control or prevent this cankerworm called workplace deviation among employees who implement policies within the organisation.

1   INTRODUCTION

Deviant behaviours, defined as actions that violate established social norms or formal laws (Hartney, 2023; Jeewandara & Kumari, 2021), can occur within organisations and are then classified as workplace deviance (Tian & Guo, 2023). This form of deviance encompasses voluntary actions by individuals or groups that contradict accepted values and expectations, potentially harming the organisation or its members. However, not all workplace deviance was negative. Although unauthorised, positive deviance can benefit the organisation by fostering innovation and challenging unproductive norms (Durmaz & Gümüştekin, 2023; Sharma & Chillakuri, 2023). Positive deviance includes voicing constructive criticism from superiors, refusing to comply with unethical directives, and engaging in whistleblowing activities to protect the organisation's interests. These behaviours, often characterised by altruism, charisma, and a strong commitment to ethical principles, can contribute to organisational growth and success (Durmaz & Gümüştekin, 2023).

Conversely, negative workplace deviance is characterised as deliberate behaviour that harms organisations and individuals (Ugwu Callistus, 2023; Zoogah & Zoogah, 2020). This form of deviance, the focal point of this study, encompasses both latent and conscious efforts to inflict harm, manifesting itself in various voluntary actions that can negatively impact organisations, their objectives, assets, stakeholders, and even customers. It is crucial to distinguish negative deviance from accidental or unintentional behaviour. Deviant workplace behaviour (negative) involves intentional and potentially harmful actions, although they may not always result in actual harm (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). The key characteristic is the intent to cause harm, which makes it a deviant act. These behaviours can be directed at the organisation, its members, or both and are perpetrated primarily by employees, not external parties. While negative behaviours from non-members can also have detrimental effects, they are less controllable by the organisation (Olabimitan & Okurame, 2021). This study emphasises the importance of understanding and addressing negative workplace deviance within the organisation, as it is more amenable to internal intervention and control.

Negative workplace deviance, also termed counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) (Jeewandara & Kumari, 2021; Sypniewska, 2020; Ugwu Callistus, 2023), is classified into two primary categories: interpersonal and organisational (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Mackey et al., 2021; Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Although both forms inflict harm on the organisation, they differ in their objectives. Interpersonal deviance is directed towards individuals (e.g., colleagues and supervisors), whereas organisational deviance targets the organisation itself, often through actions impacting property or production (Bashir et al., 2019). Robinson and Bennett's (1995) seminal work further delineates workplace deviance along two dimensions: severity (minor vs. severe) and target (interpersonal vs. organisational). This typology offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the various manifestations of CWB, ranging from minor interpersonal conflicts to severe acts of sabotage. Their findings culminate in a two-dimensional model that classifies deviant workplace behaviours into four quadrants: production deviance, property deviance, political deviance, and personal aggression.

The Nigerian civil service, a cornerstone of government programme implementation, has been plagued by workplace deviance, hindering the effective delivery of essential services (Olabimitan & Okurame, 2021). Despite well-intentioned policies such as fuel subsidies, agricultural loans, and school feeding programmes, their impact is often compromised by employee misconduct, such as absenteeism, misuse of government resources, and corruption. This prevalent issue requires urgent scholarly attention, as deviant behaviour significantly influences workplace performance and ultimately undermines the well-being of Nigerian citizens. Understanding the root causes of workplace deviance within the Nigerian civil service is crucial to developing targeted interventions and promoting a more ethical and productive work environment.

Previous research on workplace deviance has investigated a wide range of predictors, including organisational politics (Bashir et al., 2019), individual characteristics (Pletzer et al., 2019; Pletzer et al., 2023), ethical leadership (Tufan et al., 2023), and job-related factors (Fan et al., 2023). Studies have also explored mediators and moderators of these relationships, such as organisational justice (Tufan et al., 2023), job satisfaction (Anis & Emil, 2022), and perceived organisational support (Fridslan et al., 2023; Shi et al., 2022). However, there is a notable gap in research on the role of organisational situational variables as both antecedents and mediators of workplace deviance, particularly in the public sector of developing economies (D'Silva et al., 2020; García-Contreras et al., 2022; Yasir & Khan, 2020).

Although some studies have examined workplace deviance in the public sector (Shaheen et al., 2017), most have focused on the private sector, limiting the applicability of findings to the unique context of public service. Furthermore, previous studies have often overlooked the potential mediating role of organisational culture in the relationship between situational factors and deviant behaviour (D'Silva et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2018). This research gap highlights the need for further investigation into the specific factors that predict and mediate workplace deviance in the public sector, particularly in developing economies such as Nigeria, where the impact of such behaviour on service delivery and organisational effectiveness can be particularly significant.

The rising prevalence of negative workplace deviance, encompassing behaviours such as absenteeism, sabotage, and theft (Farooq et al., 2023; Olabimitan & Okurame, 2021; Tian & Guo, 2023), poses a

significant threat to organisations across sectors. This counterproductive behaviour has been associated with corporate failures, financial burdens, and negative impacts on the overall economy (Baharom et al., 2017; Gawke et al., 2018; Sustiyatik et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2019). Although research has examined various predictors of workplace deviance, including individual and leadership factors, a knowledge gap exists on the role of situational factors and organisational culture in the public sector, particularly in developing economies such as Nigeria (D'Silva et al., 2020). Although workplace deviance is a recognised concern across organisations (Tepper et al., 2017), its impact on the public sector remains under-researched, particularly in developing economies. This study addresses this critical gap by focusing on federal employees from Southwest Nigeria. D'Silva et al. (2020) investigated the predictive influence of perceived organisational justice, workplace stress, and perceived organisational support on workplace deviance while examining the mediating role of organisational culture.

Given the pivotal role of public service employees in government programme implementation and the direct impact of their behaviour on programme outcomes (Shaheen et al., 2017), understanding the unique drivers of workplace deviance in this context is crucial. By identifying these drivers and exploring how organisational culture can mitigate their effects, this study aims to develop targeted interventions and strategies to reduce deviant behaviour and improve organisational performance in the Nigerian public service. This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on workplace deviance by providing valuable information on its antecedents and potential remedies within a specific cultural and economic context.

2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 THEORETICAL REVIEW

Analysing workplace deviance within the public sector requires a multifaceted approach that integrates insights from social exchange theory (SET) and strain theory while considering the role of social bonds. Contingency and person-situation controversy theories (Beck & Jackson, 2022) underscore the significance of situational factors in shaping individual behaviour. Social learning theorists posit that individuals adapt their actions to situational reinforcement contingencies (Gross, 2020). In the workplace, this implies that employees' perceptions of organisational support and fairness and their levels of perceived stress can significantly influence their propensity for deviant behaviour (Fridslan et al., 2023).

SET, founded on the principle of reciprocity (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961), highlights the importance of a balanced exchange relationship between employees and organisations. SET has a broad framework that describes almost any finding (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Sharpley, 2014) due to the flexibility and variety in SET in terms of social and economic transactions and exchanges and psychological exchanges. These are described as active exchanges (visible) and inactive exchanges (less visible- the positive (withholding undesirable behaviour) and the negative (withholding desirable behaviour) (Cropanzano et al., 2017). The reciprocity rules are more inactive and destructive behaviours than inactive and constructive (Ahmad et al., 2023). The inactive exchanges are termed psychological dimensions by Ahmad et al. (2023).

Perceived imbalances in this exchange can foster feelings of injustice (Elgammal et al., 2023), potentially leading to deviant behaviours, such as absenteeism, sabotage, or misuse of resources (Cohen & Diamant, 2019). However, SET alone does not fully capture the complexity of public-sector deviance. Furthermore, the public sector's unique characteristics, such as weaker social bonds (Blau & Scott, 2003), can exacerbate strain, leading to deviant behaviours independent of exchange relationships. Agnew's (1992) General Strain Theory (GST) complements SET by emphasising the role of strain in workplace deviance. In the public sector, stressors, such as excessive workloads and lack of support, can trigger negative emotions, manifesting as absenteeism, presenteeism, or rule violations. A comprehensive approach to understanding and mitigating workplace deviance in the public sector requires integrating insights from SET and GST. Organisations must foster fair exchange relationships, prioritise transparency and support (Sabokro et al., 2020), actively manage stressors and cultivate a positive work environment (Ike et al., 2024). Moreover, drawing from Hirschi's (1969) control theory, organisations should strengthen social bonds through supportive leadership, open communication, and collaborative opportunities. Public sector

organisations can effectively create a workplace culture that discourages deviance and promotes ethical behaviour by addressing individual and organisational factors.

2.2 SITUATIONAL FACTORS AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVIANCE

Workplace deviance, a multifaceted phenomenon, has been extensively examined through various theoretical lenses. Organisational justice, a key situational factor, significantly influences employee behaviour. When people perceive unfair treatment or imbalanced resource allocation, they may experience feelings of injustice (Elgammal et al., 2023), potentially leading to counterproductive work behaviours (CWB), such as absenteeism, sabotage, or resource misuse (Cohen & Diamant, 2019; Öztürk & Poyraz, 2021). In contrast, a strong perception of organisational justice is associated with reduced workplace deviance (Hashish, 2019). Empirical evidence supports this negative correlation, as demonstrated in studies involving emergency service personnel (Lee & Abdullah, 2019) and public-sector employees (Obalade & Mtembu, 2023). Additionally, perceived competence has been identified as a mediator between workplace discrimination and deviant behaviour (Dora & Azim, 2019). Another critical factor is workplace stress, often resulting from role ambiguity, job overload, and work-family conflicts (Ma & Li, 2019; Suroso et al., 2020). High-stress levels can reduce motivation and trigger negative emotions, manifesting as deviant behaviour (Haider et al., 2018; Sharma & Singh, 2023; Sharma & Chillakuri, 2023). General strain theory explains this link, suggesting that stress-induced negative emotions can fuel aggression and deviant acts (Anis & Emil, 2022; Silva & Ranasinghe, 2017). However, job satisfaction can act as a buffer to mitigate the impact of stress on counterproductive behaviour (Anis & Emil, 2022).

Perceived organisational support (POS), rooted in social exchange theory, is another significant predictor of workplace deviance. Employees who feel valued and supported by their organisation are less likely to engage in deviant behaviour (Elgammal et al., 2023; Sakr et al., 2022). Conversely, lack of support can lead to psychological distress and undesirable behaviours (Yang et al., 2022). Organisational support can mediate the relationship between workplace stressors and deviant behaviour (Fridslan et al., 2023), promoting mental well-being and positive job attitudes (Farhan & Atif, 2022; Shi et al., 2022). However, recent research suggests that the direct relationship between social support and deviance may not always be significant (Alyafi & AlZamil, 2024). Given the complex interplay of these factors, this study hypothesises that organisational justice, workplace stress, and perceived organisational support will jointly and independently predict deviant organisational behaviour.

H1: Organisational justice, workplace stress, and perceived organisational support jointly and independently predict deviant organisational behaviour.
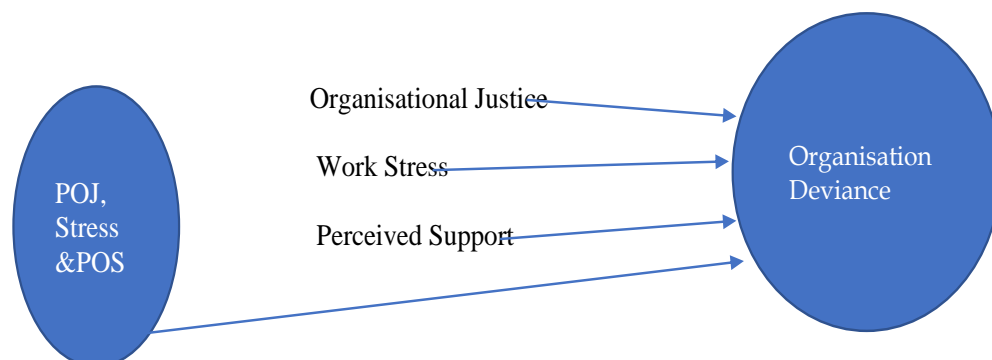

Fig 1. Predicted independent and joint influence of situational variables on organisational deviant behaviour.

2.3 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE, SITUATIONAL FACTORS, AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVIANCE

Organisational culture plays a pivotal role in shaping various organisational outcomes, including productivity, absenteeism, citizenship behaviour, and turnover (Mohsen et al., 2020), while also fostering a shared psychological commitment to the organisation's structure and values among employees (Volkova & Chiker, 2020). Research has shown that a robust organisational culture that explicitly discourages deviant behaviour can positively influence employee commitment and reduce counterproductive work behaviours (Di Stefano et al., 2019; Tafolli & Grabner-Kräuter, 2020). This is achieved by establishing shared ethical norms and expectations, which guide employees towards appropriate behaviour through socialisation processes (Filabi & Bulgarella, 2018; Olabimitan & Okurame, 2018).

Research supports the idea that organisational culture can mediate the relationship between situational predictors of deviance, such as perceived injustice, stress, and lack of support, and the actual occurrence of deviant behaviour (Öztürk & Poyraz, 2021). For example, a culture that emphasises benevolence and principled conduct can weaken the negative impact of these stressors on employee behaviour. Additionally, trust in management can mediate the relationship between ethical leadership and workplace deviance (Yasir & Khan, 2020). Based on these theoretical and empirical foundations, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H2: Organisational culture will mediate the influence of situational factors (perceived organisational justice, workplace stress, and perceived organisational support) on organisational deviant behaviour.
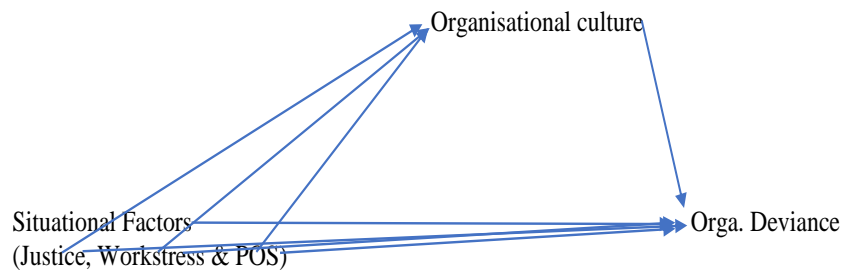

Fig 2. Predicted direct influence of situational factors on organisational deviance and the mediatory role of organisational culture

3 METHODS

3.1 RESEARCH STRATEGY AND DESIGN

This study used a cross-sectional survey to investigate the complex interaction of situational factors, organisational culture, and workplace deviance among federal employees in southwest Nigeria. This methodological approach, preferred for its ability to capture a snapshot of a population at a specific point in time (Setia, 2016), was particularly suitable for examining the prevalence and distribution of these variables within the defined sample. Data collection occurred concurrently across all participants, irrespective of demographic differences (e.g., age, education, gender, ethnicity, and job status), ensuring a representative sample of the federal workforce and minimising potential biases (Fowler Jr, 2013). This comprehensive approach allows for a holistic understanding of the factors influencing workplace deviance within the Nigerian public sector.

3.2 PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

This study focuses on 430 federal public employees in six states in southwest Nigeria, one of the country's six geopolitical zones. Data were collected between November 2021 and March 2022, with appointments scheduled Tuesdays through Thursdays, from 10 am to 4 pm. Participants were selected from randomly chosen ministries and given questionnaires to complete, which took approximately 7-15 minutes on average. This targeted approach allows a diverse sample within the public sector, ensuring representation across various government departments and agencies.

3.3 VARIABLES AND MEASURES.

This study employs a multi-dimensional approach to assess the complex interplay of factors contributing to workplace deviance. Data were collected on sociodemographic characteristics (age, education, gender, job tenure, grade level, and religion) and key psychological constructs.

Perceived Organisational Justice (POJ): Niehoff and Moorman's (1993) 20-item scale encompassing distributive, procedural, and interactional justice was utilised. The scale demonstrated high reliability in the original study (α = 0.83) and the present pilot study (α = 0.95). The responses were collected on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagreeing (1) to strongly agreeing (7).

Perceived Workplace Stress (PWS): Cohen's (1988) 10-item Perceived Stress Scale was employed to measure how individuals appraised their life situations as stressful. Although the original scale reported an internal reliability of 0.78, the current study found a slightly lower Cronbach alpha of 0.73. The responses were given on a 5-point scale ranging from never (0) to very often (4).

Perceived Organisational Support (POS): Allen's (2001) 14-item Family-Supportive Organisation Perception Scale was adapted to assess employees' perceptions of organisational support. The original scale had an internal reliability of 0.67, whereas the present study reported a Cronbach alpha of 0.65. The responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from strongly disagreeing (1) to strongly agreeing (5).

Organisational Culture (OC): The 16-item scale developed by Deshpandé et al. (1993) was used to measure organisational culture. The scale assesses employees' perceptions of their organisation's prevailing culture regarding assumptions, beliefs, and values. The original scale reported an internal reliability of 0.75, while the pilot study yielded a Cronbach alpha 0.90. Responses were collected on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagreeing (1) to strongly agreeing (5).

Workplace Deviant Behaviour (WDB): A 54-item scale developed by the researcher was used to assess workplace deviance directed at the organisation. The scale demonstrated high internal reliability (α = 0.94) and was scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from never (1) to daily (7). The development process involved focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and rigorous item analysis. The final scale comprised two dimensions: interpersonal deviance and organisational deviance.

3.3.1 DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF THE WORKPLACE DEVIANCE SCALE

A rigorous process was used to develop and validate a new scale to measure workplace behaviour (WDB). Initially, objective sampling was used to select participants for focus group discussions (FGD) and in-depth interviews (IDI). Ten undergraduate psychology students trained over two weeks facilitated these discussions, resulting in 91 potential items for the WDB scale.

After analysing the elements, irrelevant or ambiguous elements were removed, leaving 73 elements for a pilot study in six southwestern Nigerian states. The pilot study data were subjected to intercorrelation and communality analyses, eliminating items below a 0.5 communality threshold. This refinement yielded a 54-item scale. Factor analysis identified four distinct factors: political deviance, personal aggression, property deviance, and work-time deviance, using an eigenvalue cutoff of 1.0. These factors were then categorised into interpersonal deviance (political and personal aggression) and organisational deviance (property and work-time deviance).

The finalised WDB scale comprises two 27-item subscales, one for each deviance dimension. The interpersonal deviance subscale exhibited a Cronbach alpha of 0.82, whereas the organisational deviance subscale demonstrated a reliability of 0.94. The overall scale achieved a Cronbach's alpha of 0.88. Respondents rated each item on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all to 7 = Daily), with higher scores indicating greater involvement in workplace deviance. This validated scale offers a robust tool for assessing and understanding deviant behaviour in organisational settings.

3.4 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF DATA

Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarise the data. A multivariate regression analysis was used to test Hypothesis 1, which examined situational factors' joint and independent effects on organisational deviance. This approach allowed us to assess the simultaneous influence of multiple predictors on the outcome variables. For Hypothesis 2, which proposed a mediating role of organisational culture, structural equation modelling (SEM) was used. SEM is a powerful statistical technique that examines complex relationships between variables, including direct and indirect effects (Kline, 2023). The specific SEM approach employed in this study was bootstrapping, a resampling method that enhances the robustness of the mediation analysis results. Multivariate regression and SEM comprehensively evaluated hypothesised relationships between situational factors, organisational culture, and workplace deviance. This rigorous statistical approach ensured the validity and reliability of the findings, providing a strong foundation for interpreting the results and drawing meaningful conclusions.

4   RESULTS

Data collected from 430 participants from 15 Federal Ministries was analysed rigorously. Multivariate regression tests evaluated the direct relationship between independent and dependent variables. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to examine the hypothesised mediating role of organisational culture. Before conducting the mediation analysis, the model's fit was assessed and confirmed to be satisfactory, ensuring the validity of subsequent analyses. The results of these analyses, along with the descriptive statistics of the variables and demographic information of the participants, are presented in the following tables. The findings provide valuable information on the complex relationships between situational factors, organisational culture, and workplace deviance among federal employees in Southwest Nigeria.

Table 1.   Distribution of respondents according to sociodemographic characteristics

Variable	Response Category	N	%
Gender	Men	228	53.0%
	Women	202	47.0%
Age	18-35 years of age	89	20.7%
	26-40years	166	38.6%
	41-60years	175	40.7%
Grade	1-7	69	16.0%
	8-12	253	58.8%
	13-17	108	25.1%
Tenure	5-9years	135	31.4%
	10 years and older	295	68.6%
Religion	Christianity	287	66.7%
	Islam	140	32.6%
	Others	3	0.7%
Educational Qualifications	Primary school certificate	8	1.9%
	Secondary School Certificate	27	6.3%
	National Diploma	54	12.6%
	First degree	207	48.1%
	Postgraduates	123	28.6%
	Others	11	2.6%

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics. The study sample consisted of 430 federal employees in Southwest Nigeria, with a small majority being male (53.0%). The age distribution was relatively balanced, with the largest group (40.7%) within the 41-60 age range. In terms of educational attainment, the majority of participants held a Higher National Diploma (HND) or a Bachelor of Science (BSc.) degree (48.1%), followed by those with Postgraduate Diplomas (PGD) or a Master of Science (M.Sc.) (28.6%), respectively. Regarding religious affiliation, the sample was predominantly Christian (66.7%), followed by Muslims (32.6%), with a small percentage reporting other affiliations (0.7%). Job tenure in public service

was primarily long-term, with 68.6% of respondents having served for more than ten years. This demographic diversity strengthens the study's representation of the Nigerian federal workforce, enhancing the generalisability of its findings regarding workplace deviance and organisational culture.

Table 2.   Descriptive statistics

		Minimum	Maximum	x̄	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Workplace Organisational Deviance	430	54.00	255.00	70.05	38.235	22.898	8.143
Justice Scale	430	33.00	130.00	92.29	16.602	-0.418	0.918
Perceived Stress Scale	430	5.00	40.00	25.78	6.202	0.090	-0.615
Perceived Organisational Support	430	20.00	60.00	43.13	6.511	-0.354	0.231
Organisational culture	430	27.00	112.00	76.63	15.306	-0.278	-0.160

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the key variables in the study. Workplace deviance data suggest a wide range of deviant behaviours, with most respondents reporting lower levels of deviance but a few extreme cases indicated by positive skew and high kurtosis. Organisational justice and perceived organisational support variables exhibit distributions relatively close to normal, suggesting a balanced spread of perceptions among respondents, with perceived stress nearly symmetrical, indicating that stress levels are fairly evenly distributed among participants. However, the slightly negative kurtosis suggests fewer extreme scores than those expected in a normal distribution.

4.1   4.1 HYPOTHESES TESTING

Regression analysis was conducted using the AMOS-SEM statistical software to assess perceived situational factors' joint and independent impact on public employees' organisational deviance. This analysis aimed to estimate the relationships between the predictor and the dependent variables, excluding the mediator (organisational culture). The resulting structural model exhibited excellent fit indices ($\chi2/df$ = 1.16, RMSEA = 0.019, GFI = 0.999, AGFI = 0.987, IFI = 0.998, TLI = 0.989, CFI = 0.998, and SRMR = 0.018). These values align with the benchmarks for model fit proposed by Hair et al. (2010), indicating that the model adequately represents the underlying data. The model demonstrated moderate explanatory power, collectively accounting for 7% of the variance in workplace deviance. This suggests that the combined influence of perceived organisational support, perceived workplace stress, and organisational justice contributes to a significant portion of the variability in self-reported organisational deviance among public servants in this study. The detailed results in Table 3 further elucidate the specific predictive influence of each predictor variable on the dependent variable, providing valuable insight into the relative importance of each factor in shaping deviant behaviour.

Table 3.   SEM regression of Organisational predictors of workplace deviance

Dependent Variable		Variables		SE	CR	P-value	β	R2
								0.07
WPDBS	<---	PWS	1.085	0.307	3.532	***	0.176	
WPDBS	<---	POS	-0.160	0.274	-0.587	0.557	-0.027	
WPDBS	<---	POJ	-0.322	0.115	-2.805	0.005	-0.140	

*** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.010; * p < 0.050; † p < 0.100

Regression analysis revealed significant relationships between perceived stress, organisational justice, and workplace deviance. A positive association was found between perceived stress and deviant behaviour, with a beta coefficient (β) of 0.176 (t = 3.53, p < 0.05), indicating that higher stress levels were linked to higher levels of deviance. It also supports the idea that stress can cause employees to act against organisational norms. The analysis revealed a significant negative correlation between perceived organisational justice and workplace deviance (β = -0.143, t = -2.81, p < 0.05), indicating that employees who perceive fairness and equity at their workplace are less likely to engage in deviant behaviours. However, perceived organisational support did not correlate significantly with workplace deviance (β = -

0.03, t = -0.587, p > 0.05), suggesting that variations in perceived support levels do not directly influence deviant behaviours. In summary, the results partially confirm hypothesis (H1), demonstrating that perceived stress and organisational justice significantly predict deviant organisational behaviour, while perceived organisational support does not. This underscores the importance of addressing workplace stress and fostering a sense of fairness in mitigating deviant workplace behaviour.

4.2   HYPOTHESIS TESTING AND MEDIATION ANALYSIS

To evaluate Hypothesis 2, which posited that organisational culture would mediate the relationship between situational factors and deviant organisational behaviour, a mediation analysis was conducted following the fundamental conditions outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986). This approach requires performing three simple regression analyses and one multiple regression analysis for each significant predictor of the dependent variable. The criteria for establishing mediation include the following: the independent variable significantly predicts the mediator, the mediator significantly predicts the dependent variable, the independent variable significantly predicts the dependent variable and the independent variable and mediator jointly predict the dependent variable, with the mediator's unique contribution being significant. This study employed two complementary methods for mediation analysis: structural equation modelling (SEM) with bootstrapping and the Sobel test. The AMOS 26 software and the Gaskination estimation were used for these analyses. A model fit assessment was conducted before ensuring the validity of the mediation analysis; the results are presented in Table 4. The satisfactory fit indices obtained support the model's suitability for further mediation analysis (Lawal & Babalola, 2016).

Table 4.   Summary of the Organisational culture of the model fit as a mediator of the workplace deviance model of the Organisational predictors.

Parameters	Values	Remarks
Model χ^2	1.15 (1) p = 0.28	Fitted
GFI	0.99	Significant
AGFI	0.98	Significant
CFI	0.99	Significant
TLI	0.99	Significant
NFI	0.99	Significant
IFI	0.99	Significant
SRMR	0.02	Significant
RMSEA	0.02	Significant
AIC	29.15	Significant
BIC	29.55	Significant
CMIN/DF	1.15	Significant
LO-HI 90	0.00 - 0.13	Significant

Notes: GFI = goodness-of-fit index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; AGFI = adjusted goodness-of-fit index; NFI = Normed Fit Index; CFI = comparative fit index; IFI = incremental fit index; SRMR = standardised root mean square residual; CMIN/DF = chi-square minimum discrepancy/degrees of freedom; BIC = Bayesian information criterion; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; AIC = Aikake information criterion; Lower scores in the AIC and RMSEA index designate a better fit. LO-HI 90, LO 90 and HI 90 are the lower and upper ends of a 90% confidence interval.

The structural equation model (SEM) employed in this study demonstrated a good fit to the data, as evidenced by the following fit indices: $\chi 2$ = 1.15 (df = 1, p > 0.28), CFI = 0.99, TLI = 0.99, AGFI = 0.98, GFI = 0.99, NFI = 0.99, IFI = 0.99, AIC = 29.15, BIC = 29.55, CMIN/DF = 1.15, RMSEA = 0.02, and SRMR = 0.02. The 95% confidence interval for RMSEA (0.0–0.13) further supports the adequacy of the model. These results indicate that the model is interpretably stable and represents the underlying relationships between the investigated variables.

4.2.1 CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS (CFA) RESULTS

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to validate the measurement model comprising five latent constructs: organisational justice (OrgJ), work stress (Workstress), perceived organisational support (POS), workplace deviance (WPD), and organisational culture (Orgculture), along with their respective observed indicators. The initial analysis indicated a poor model fit, necessitating the removal of several items to improve the model's accuracy and validity. The refinement process resulted in removing eight items from the WPD scale, five from the OJS scale, and four from the work stress scale, while no items were removed from the organisational culture scale. Chi-square (χ^2) tests (2) were performed to compare the user-specified model [User Model: χ^2 = 8085, df = 850] with a baseline model [baseline model: χ^2 = 347528, df = 903], both in their original and scaled forms, to assess the effectiveness of these modifications. The results demonstrated significant differences between the User Model (χ^2 = 4633, df = 850) and Baseline Model (χ^2 = 89275, df = 903) (p < 0.001 for all comparisons), indicating that the refined User Model provided a substantially better fit to the data. This confirms the validity of the measurement model and its suitability for further analysis of the relationships between the latent constructs.

4.2.2 MODEL FIT ASSESSMENT

The model fit assessment was conducted under three conditions: classical, robust, and scaled, with the corresponding 95% confidence intervals reported for each. In classical estimation, the standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) was 0.090, while the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was 0.094, with a 95% confidence interval of 0.092–0.096 (p < 0.001). Employing a robust estimation method yielded an SRMR value of 0.081. Under scaled conditions, SRMR remained at 0.081, while RMSEA improved to 0.068 (95% CI: 0.066–0.070, p < 0.001). The User Model consistently demonstrated a better fit to the baseline model on all indices, as evidenced by the higher values observed (Table 5). These findings provide robust evidence of the adequacy of the User Model, indicating that it effectively represents the underlying relationships among the variables under study. The superior fit of the User Model to the data suggests that it is a more accurate representation of the phenomenon being investigated than the Baseline Model, as it provides a strong foundation for further analysis and interpretation of the model's results.

Table 5.   Model of comparative fit indices

Fit Index	User Model	Baseline Model
CFI (Comparative Fit Index)	0.979	Lower
TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index)	0.978	Lower
NNFI (Bentler-Bonett Non-normed Fit Index)	0.978	Lower
RNI (Relative Noncentrality Index)	0.979	Lower
NFI (Bentler-Bonett Normed Fit Index)	0.977	Lower
RFI (Bollen's Relative Fit Index)	0.975	Lower
IFI (Bollen's Incremental Fit Index)	0.979	Lower
PNFI (Parsimony Normed Fit Index)	0.919	Lower

4.2.3 ADDITIONAL FIT INDICES

Additional fit indices were calculated, including Hoelter Critical N (CN) for significance levels of 0.05 and 0.01, which yielded values of 109.6611 and 113.1980, respectively. The Goodness-of-fit index (GFI) was 0.9817, and the adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) was 0.9753. The parsimony goodness of fit index (PGFI) was 0.7262, and the McDonald fit index (MFI) was 0.0227

4.2.4 RELIABILITY INDICES

The internal consistency of the constructs was assessed using multiple reliability indices: Cronbach's alpha (α), ordinal Cronbach's alpha, McDonald's omega (ω_1, ω_2, ω_3), and average variance extracted (AVE). Table 6 shows the values obtained: All constructs demonstrated acceptable internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The ordinal alpha values, which account for the ordinal nature of the Likert-type data, were generally consistent with Cronbach's alpha. McDonald's omega, a more robust reliability estimator, further confirmed the internal consistency of the constructs in its various formulations (ω_1, ω_2, ω_3). Additionally, the AVE values for all constructs exceeded 0.50, indicating that more than 50% of the variance in each construct was explained by its respective indicators, thus supporting convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). These reliability and validity assessments provide strong evidence for the psychometric robustness of the measures used in this study, ensuring the precision and robustness of subsequent analyses and interpretations.

Table 6.   Multiple Reliability Indices

Construct	Cronbach α	Ordinal α	McDonald's ω_1	McDonald's ω_2	McDonald's ω_3	AVE
OrgJ	0.800	0.814	0.802	0.802	0.809	0.530
Workstress	0.767	0.720	0.740	0.740	0.780	0.591
POS	0.738	0.458	0.482	0.482	0.502	0.512
WPD	0.904	0.918	0.913	0.913	0.945	0.512
Orgculture	0.965	0.986	0.972	0.972	0.990	0.830

4.2.5 HETERO-TRAIT-MONO-TRAIT (HTMT) RATIOS OF CORRELATIONS

The correlations' hetero-trait-mono-trait (HTMT) ratios were calculated to assess the discriminant validity of the latent constructs. HTMT ratios provide a robust measure of the extent to which constructs are distinct (Henseler et al., 2015). The results in Table 7 demonstrate adequate discriminant validity across all constructs, with all HTMT values falling below the commonly accepted threshold of 0.85 (or 0.90, in some stricter criteria), indicating that the constructs in the model are sufficiently differentiated and measure unique aspects of the phenomena under investigation.

Table 7.   Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratios of Correlations

	OrgJ	Workstress	POS	WPD	Orgculture
OrgJ	1.000	0.648	0.503	0.580	0.585
Workstress	0.648	1.000	1.014	0.453	0.224
POS	0.503	1.014	1.000	0.458	0.383
WPD	0.580	0.453	0.458	1.000	0.479
Orgculture	0.585	0.224	0.383	0.479	1.000

The HTMT ratios displayed in Table 7 further support the discriminant validity of the constructs. The diagonal elements (correlations within constructs) consistently exceeded the off-diagonal elements (correlations between different constructs), affirming that each construct measured a distinct aspect of the studied phenomenon. Based on this validated measurement model, the final structural equation model incorporated organisational culture as a mediator between organisational predictors (organisational justice, workplace stress, and perceived organisational support) and workplace deviance. The results of this final model, which elucidate the mediating role of organisational culture, are presented in Table 4 and are visually depicted in Figure 3.
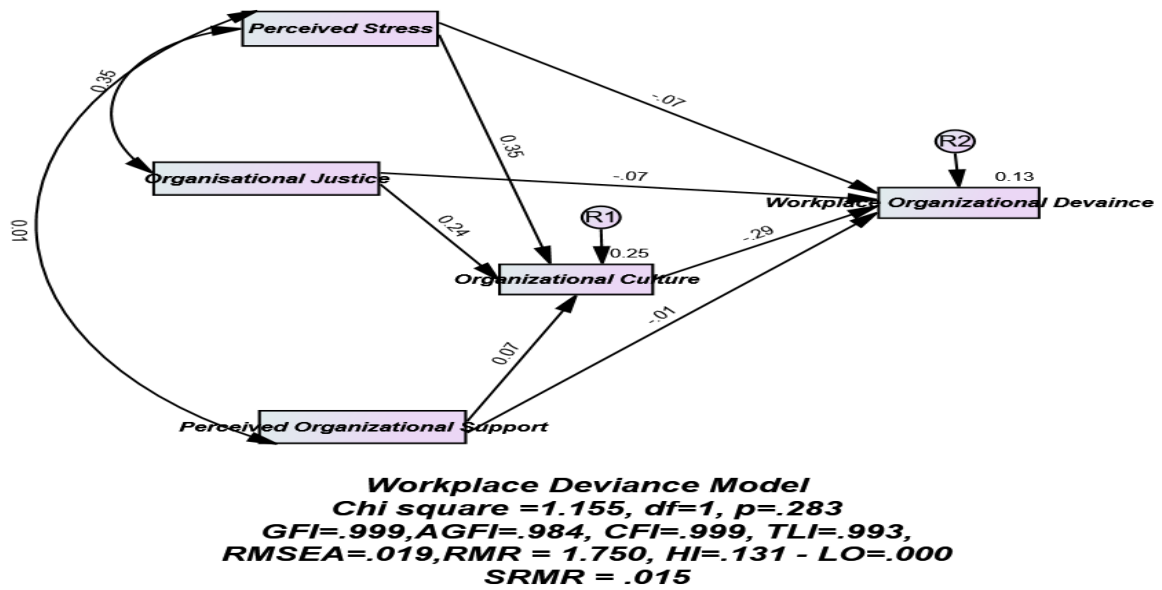
Fig 3.   Vorkplace deviance model

Workplace Deviance Model
Chi square =1.155, df=1, p=.283
GFI=.999,AGFI=.984, CFI=.999, TLI=.993,
RMSEA=.019,RMR = 1.750, HI=.131 - LO=.000
SRMR = .015

Table 8 shows that the path from POJ to OCS produced a significant positive effect (β = 0.220, p < 0.001), indicating that a higher perception of organisational justice is associated with a more favourable influence on organisational culture. The path from POS to OCS was not statistically significant (β = 0.170, p > 0.085), suggesting that the perception of organisational support had a weaker relationship with organisational culture. The path from PWS to OCS showed a strong positive effect (β = 0.868, p < 0.001), indicating that a higher perception of workplace stress significantly improved organisational culture.

Table 8. A path analysis of organisational culture as a mediator of organisational predictors of workplace deviance model

Dependent Variable		Variables	B	SE	CR	P-value	β	R2
Path to mediator								0.247
OCS	<---	POJ	0.220	0.041	5.339	***	0.239	
OCS	<---	POS	0.170	0.098	1.724	0.085	0.072	
OCS	<---	PWS	0.868	0.110	7.858	***	0.352	
Path to Dependent Variable								0.132
WPDBS	<---	PWS	-0.455	0.317	-1.436	0.151	-0.074	
WPDBS	<---	POS	-0.038	0.265	-0.142	0.887	-0.006	
WPDBS	<---	OCS	-0.725	0.130	-5.595	***	-0.290	
WPDBS	<---	POJ	-0.162	0.114	-1.418	0.156	-.070	

*** = p < 0.001, ** = p < 0.010, * = p < 0.050, † = p < 0.100

The path from PWS to WPDBS was not statistically significant (β = -0.455, p > 0.151), suggesting that the perception of workplace stress did not significantly affect workplace deviance. The path from POS to WPDBS was also not statistically significant (β = -0.038, p > 0.887), indicating that perception of organisational support did not directly influence workplace deviance. The path from OCS to WPDBS revealed a significant adverse effect (β = -0.725, p < 0.001), suggesting that a higher organisational culture was associated with reduced workplace deviance. The path from POJ to WPDBS was not statistically significant (β = -0.162, p > 0.156), indicating that perception of organisational justice did not directly influence workplace deviance. Our SEM mediation analysis results indicated that organisational culture significantly mediates organisational predictors and workplace deviance. Specifically, perceptions of organisational justice and support affect organisational culture. Although organisational justice positively influenced organisational culture, organisational support did not significantly impact it. Organisational culture is a crucial factor in reducing workplace deviance. A higher organisational culture was associated

with less workplace deviance, highlighting the importance of fostering a positive and inclusive organisational culture to mitigate deviant workplace behaviours.

Table 9 provides the results of the bootstrapped indirect path analysis, which examines the mediation effect of organisational culture on the relationship between the predictors of POJ, POS, PSS, and workplace deviance. The indirect path from POJ to OCS to WPDBS is significant (b = -0.160, p < 0.001), indicating that organisational culture partially mediates the relationship between positive organisational justice and workplace deviance. The indirect path from PWS to OCS to WPDBS was also significant (b = -0.629, p < 0.001), suggesting that organisational culture partially mediates the relationship between perceived workplace stress and workplace deviance. However, the indirect route from POS to OCS to WPDBS is insignificant (b = -0.123, p > 0.100), indicating that organisational culture does not mediate the relationship between positive organisational support and workplace deviance. In conclusion, the study's results suggest that organisational culture mediates the relationships between specific organisational predictors of POJ and PWS and workplace deviance, as evidenced by the significant indirect paths. However, the mediating effect of organisational culture was not observed in the relationship between POS and WPDBS.

Table 9.   The bootstrapped indirect path of organisational culture as a mediator of organisational predictors works place deviance model.

Indirect path	b	Lower	Upper	P-value	B
POJ --> OCS --> WPDBS	-0.160	-0.239	-0.092	0.001	-0.069***
POS --> OCS --> WPDBS	-0.123	-0.296	0.000	0.100	-0.021
PWS --> OCS --> WPDBS	-0.629	-0.881	-0.431	0.001	-0.102***

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.010, * p < 0.050, † p < 0.100

5   DISCUSSION

The results of the multivariate regression analysis partially confirmed Hypothesis 1, revealing a significant joint predictive effect of perceived organisational justice, workplace stress, and organisational support on organisational deviance among public employees. Specifically, higher levels of perceived injustice and stress are associated with increased deviant behaviour, supporting previous research linking these factors to counterproductive work behaviours (Anis & Emil, 2022; Fatoki, 2021; Haider et al., 2018; Hashish, 2019; Obalade & Mtembu, 2023; Öztürk & Poyraz, 2021; Sharma & Singh, 2023). This aligns with Mischel's person-situation debate, emphasising the critical role of situational factors in shaping individual behaviour, particularly deviance (Mischel, 1968). However, contrary to expectations, perceived organisational support did not significantly predict workplace deviance in this study. This finding might be attributed to the lack of visible support programmes in the sampled public organisations, highlighting a potential avenue for future research. However, the results underscore the importance of fostering a just and low-stress work environment to minimise deviant behaviour.

The significant negative relationship between perceived organisational justice and workplace deviance corroborates previous findings (Cohen & Diamant, 2019; Hashish, 2019; Obalade & Mtembu, 2023; Öztürk & Poyraz, 2021). Employees who perceive fair treatment and processes are less likely to engage in deviant behaviour. This finding reinforces that a positive perception of organisational justice is essential to promote ethical behaviour and reduce workplace deviance.

Additionally, the findings of this study are consistent with those of Akinsola and Alarape (2019), demonstrating that a positive perception of the three situational variables (justice, stress, and support) interactively reduces employee deviance. This highlights the importance of a comprehensive approach to mitigating workplace deviance in the public sector, addressing individual perceptions and the broader organisational climate. The results of this study corroborate previous research findings, indicating a significant positive relationship between perceived work stress and organisational deviance (Adekanmbi & Ukpere, 2019; Black & Hendy, 2019; Zhang et al., 2017). This aligns with the understanding that stressful

work environments such as role ambiguity, job overload, and conflict can overwhelm employees' coping mechanisms (Ma & Li, 2019; Suroso et al., 2020). Such a strain can trigger frustration, anger, and ultimately an increase in deviant behaviours such as absenteeism and aggression, a phenomenon consistent with the frustration-aggression theory.

However, the study's findings regarding the relationship between perceived organisational support and workplace deviance diverge from previous research. Although prior studies have consistently shown that perceived organisational support mitigates deviant behaviour (Elgammal et al., 2023; Fridslan et al., 2023; Kalemci et al., 2019), this study did not find a significant association. This unexpected result aligns with a recent study by Alyafi and AlZamil (2024), who also reported an insignificant direct relationship between various sources of social support and deviant behaviour.

The lack of significance in this study may be attributed to the absence of robust organisational support programmes in the public organisations sampled. Such programmes, including health insurance, daycare, financial assistance, and leadership support, buffer the negative effects of stress and reduce the likelihood of deviant behaviour. The absence of these support mechanisms may have reduced the perceived value of organisational support, making it less effective in curbing deviance. This highlights the need for more research to investigate the complex interplay between organisational support, workplace stressors, and deviant behaviour in the context of public sector organisations, particularly in developing countries where such support programmes are often limited.

The second hypothesis, positing that organisational culture mediates the influence of situational factors on organisational deviance, was partially confirmed through structural equation modelling (SEM) based on Baron and Kenny's (1986) and Lawal and Babalola's (2016) frameworks. The results indicate that the organisational culture significantly mediates the relationship between perceived organisational justice and workplace deviance while partially mediating the effect of workplace stress. Specifically, a strong organisational culture appears to nullify the direct effect of perceived injustice on deviant behaviour, suggesting that a positive and ethical culture can override feelings of unfairness and reduce the likelihood of employees engaging in counterproductive acts. This finding aligns with previous research that emphasises the crucial role of organisational culture in shaping employee behaviour and mitigating the negative effects of situational stressors (Filabi & Bulgarella, 2018; Olabimitan & Okurame, 2018; Tafolli & Grabner-Kräuter, 2020).

Furthermore, the study's results resonate with the control theory (Hirschi, 1969), underscoring the importance of social bonds and attachments in deterring deviant behaviour. In this context, a strong organisational culture can foster employees' sense of belonging and commitment, encouraging them to prioritise the collective good over individual grievances, even in the face of perceived injustice or stress. However, no mediating effect of organisational culture was observed in the relationship between perceived organisational support and workplace deviance. This unexpected finding may be attributed to the specific characteristics of the public organisations sampled, such as the limited availability of support programmes, as discussed earlier. However, the results highlight the importance of cultivating a supportive and ethical organisational culture to mitigate the negative impact of situational factors on workplace deviance.

In summary, this study demonstrated that organisational culture plays a crucial but nuanced role in mediating the relationship between situational factors and workplace deviance. A strong organisational culture can buffer against perceived injustice and stress, reducing the likelihood of deviant behaviour. However, the effectiveness of this mediating effect may vary depending on the specific nature of the organisational support provided. More research is needed to explore these nuances and develop comprehensive strategies for fostering positive organisational cultures that promote ethical behaviour and discourage deviance in the workplace.

6   CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence of the significant interaction between situational factors, organisational culture, and workplace deviance among public employees. The results confirm that perceived organisational support, work stress, and organisational justice collectively predict

deviant organisational behaviour. Furthermore, the study reveals the crucial mediating role of organisational culture in shaping this relationship.

Specifically, organisational culture was found to significantly mediate the impact of organisational justice on deviance, suggesting that a positive and ethical culture can attenuate the negative effects of perceived injustice on employee behaviour. Furthermore, culture partially mediated the influence of work stress, indicating that a supportive and healthy work environment can mitigate the stress-deviance link.

These findings underscore the importance of cultivating a strong organisational culture prioritising fairness, support and well-being to reduce workplace deviance. Although situational factors, such as injustice and stress, undeniably contribute to deviant behaviour, organisational culture is a powerful tool to mitigate its negative impact. This highlights the need for public sector organisations to invest in developing and maintaining a positive organisational culture to foster a more ethical and productive workforce. The findings of this study have important implications for future research and practice. They suggest that interventions to reduce workplace deviance should address individual-level factors and cultivate a positive organisational culture. By creating a supportive, low-stress work environment, organisations can effectively reduce the incidence of deviant behaviour and promote employee well-being.

6.1   MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS.

The findings of this study underscore the critical role of organisational factors in shaping employee behaviour and highlight actionable strategies for public sector managers to mitigate workplace deviance. First, organisations should prioritise fair and transparent human resource management practices by implementing equitable recruitment, selection, promotion, and reward systems, ensuring employees perceive these processes as just and impartial. Clear communication between performance expectations and evaluation criteria is also essential, and it provides adequate resources and support for employees to perform their duties effectively. By fostering a sense of fairness and equity, organisations can reduce the likelihood of deviant behaviour stemming from perceived injustice.

Second, proactive measures should be taken to manage workplace stress, such as implementing stress reduction programmes, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and providing resources to help employees cope with a demanding workload. Creating a supportive and collaborative work environment where employees feel valued and heard can reduce stress levels and deviant behaviour. Third, organisational culture plays a pivotal role in shaping employee behaviour. Cultivating an anti-deviant culture that emphasises ethical conduct, accountability, and positive reinforcement can significantly reduce the incidence of counterproductive behaviours. This can be achieved through formal policies, training programmes, and leadership commitments to ethical values.

Finally, the study's findings highlight the importance of addressing public sector organisations' unique challenges in developing countries, such as resource constraints and bureaucratic structures. These challenges can exacerbate workplace stress and perceived injustice, making it crucial for managers to implement tailored interventions that consider the specific context of their organisations. Public sector managers can effectively mitigate workplace deviance, foster a positive work environment, and improve organisational performance and service delivery by adopting a comprehensive and proactive approach that addresses individual and organisational factors.

6.2   LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

While providing valuable information on the interaction between situational factors, organisational culture, and workplace deviance, this study has limitations. Specifically, its scope is limited to federal public employees in Southwest Nigeria, one of the six geopolitical zones in the country. Although adequate, the sample size of 430 participants may not fully represent the diverse workforce in the Nigerian public sector. Future research should expand the geographic scope to include other regions and increase the sample size to enhance generalisability. Furthermore, comparative studies involving state public and

private sector workers would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the nuances of workplace deviance across different sectors and contexts.

Moreover, this study focused on middle- and lower-level employees, excluding the political and administrative heads of public services. Incorporating the perspectives of these higher-level officials into future research could shed light on the unique challenges and dynamics of deviance in the upper echelons of the public sector. Future studies should also explore the role of personality variables, individual differences in interpersonal relationships, and other factors not examined in this study, as these may contribute to interpersonal and organisational deviance.

As with any self-reported survey, the findings may be susceptible to sampling and non-response biases. Future research could employ mixed methods approaches, incorporating qualitative data collection techniques, such as interviews or focus groups, to triangulate findings and gain deeper insight into the complex phenomenon of workplace deviance. Also, future studies should investigate other situational variables not included in this research, such as job insecurity, organisational change, and leadership styles, to fully understand the multifaceted nature of workplace deviance and develop customised interventions.

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Declaration of AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

The author(s) did not use any AI tools or services for content generation or analysis that would require disclosure in the preparation of this work. All content, analysis, and conclusions are the sole responsibility of the author(s).

Appendix 1

Organisational Deviance Scale

Using the format below, indicate how often you are involved in these acts as represented in the following statement in the last working year: 1 never, 2 once in a year, 3- twice a year, 4 several times in a year, 5-monthly, 6-weekly, 7- daily.

S/N		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Accept gifts to carry out official tasks.							
2	Take away documents from official files without approval.							
3	Auction office properties are to be self-below the value price.							
4	Auction office properties to family members below value price.							
5	Auction office properties to friends below value price.							
6	Make a brief use of office property outside the office without approval.							
7	Use an official vehicle for family mobility.							
8	Convert office computers, printers, and photocopiers to a personal friend's usage.							
9	Use an official vehicle for personal assignment.							
10	Use office computers, printers, and photocopiers for personal assignments.							
11	Bought sub-standard goods for office at the prices of standard ones							
12	Share departmental confidential secrets with other workers from other departments without official approval.							
13	Share official confidential secrets with friends.							
14	Share official confidential secrets with family members.							
15	Refuse to follow official work rules.							
16	Ensure that the working tools are not working well to slow down work.							
17	Come late to work without prior notice from management.							
18	Stay away from work without approval.							
19	Leave office before closing time without permission.							
20	Leave your office for co-workers to gist.							
21	Spent hours discussing with personal visitors during working hours							
22	Spent hours chatting on social media during working hours							
23	Take a longer break than approved.							
24	Work slower than your working capacity.							
25	Delay actions on official files that need urgent attention.							
26	Drunkenness during official hours.							
27	Pretending as if sick when not, in order not to work as normal							