

# Absenteeism, Favouritism, and Tardiness as Predictors of Job Deviance in Academia: The Nigeria Experience

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## Abstract

The study investigated the influence of absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness on the deviant behaviour of university employees in Nigeria. This is for the purpose of ascertaining the relative and combined contributions of absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness on employees' deviant behaviour in higher institutions in Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. A total of 600 respondents were selected for the study, using proportionate stratified sampling technique. Four standardized instruments were used for data collection. The hypotheses generated for the study were tested at 0.05 alpha levels using Regression Analysis and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics. The findings of the study revealed that absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness were found to have jointly contributed to employees' deviant behaviour in academia in Ogun State of Nigeria. Also, favouritism was found to be the most potent predictor of employees' deviant behaviour. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that managers should not favour any employee but recognize and reward hard work based on job performance.

## Keywords

Absenteeism, Favouritism, Tardiness, Job Deviance, University Employees

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## 1. Introduction

Individual employees are the tools through which organizations can achieve their set goals. Therefore, employees' relationship with their organization is important since it can determine the development of workplace deviance (Bolin & Heatherly, 2001). Behaviour is termed deviant when "an individual or group of individuals violates organization's customs, policies or internal regulations, jeopardizing the well-being of the organization or its citizens (Robinson & Bennett, 1995)". Deviant behaviour represent acts committed by organizational members that have or are intended to have the effect of damaging co-workers, managers or the organization itself (Vardi & Weitz, 2004; Appelbaun, Iaconi & Matousek, 2007; Shamsudin,

Subramanian & Ibrahim, 2011).

Various names have been given to all forms of behaviour by employees that thwart the organizations goals such as deviant work behaviour (Bennett & Robinson, 2003), counterproductive behaviour (Fox & Spector, 1999; Owolabi & Babalola, 2005), antisocial behaviour (Giacolone & Greenberg, 1997), misconduct (Vardi & Weitz, 2004) and workplace incivility (Robbins & Judge, 2007). However, despite the name given, deviant behaviours are predicted to have negative effect on individual as well as workgroup performance (Judge & Scott, 1995; Maufi, 2011) and can also lead to intention to quit, dissatisfaction, company contempt, absenteeism, substance and privilege abuse, theft and theft approval (Bollin & Heatherly, 2001).

Researches in recent times have developed interest in the

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study of workplace deviance because it is common among employees and also poses very serious problems for organizations (Mayer, Chirasha & Mahapa, 2012; Fagbohunbe, Akinbode & Ayodeji, 2012). Fagbohunbe, Akinbode, and Ayodeji (2012) reported that between thirty-three and seventy-five per cent of all workers have engaged in one form of deviant behaviour or the other. In two different studies, Griffin and Lopez (2004), Charisha and Mahapa (2011) observed that all individuals in workplaces have the tendency of engaging in destructive behaviours.

The works of Jones (2009), Gordon (2010), and Onuoha and Ezeribe (2011) revealed that individuals who are unfairly treated are more likely to engage in deviant behaviours especially when they perceive a sense of entitlement associated with perceptions of unfairness. Also, organizational deviant behaviour could arise as a result of breach of contract by the employer (Bolin & Heatherly, 2001), perceptions of maltreatment and abusive supervision (Chiu & Peng, 2008), feelings of not being respected, frustration, injustice and threats to self (Griffin & Leary-Kelly, 2004) and when the employee is in financial trouble or feel slighted (Finn, 2013).

Deviant behaviour among employees manifest in various dysfunctional and negative ways such as decline in productivity, tardiness or excessive absenteeism and favouritism (Hams & Ogbonna, 2006; Finn, 2013). Deviant behaviour therefore, is disruptive and costly both financially and emotionally (Maufi, 2011) and as a reaction to frustrating working conditions (Lawrence & Robinson, 2007), employees withdraw physically and emotionally from the organization (Hollinger & Clark, 1982).

Consequently, the studies of Chirasha and Mahapa (2012) and Moti (2010) revealed that university employees engage in deviant behaviours while Mazniand Roziah (2011) confirmed that it is more evident in lower class employees since they commit most of their free times at getting back at whoever that offends them. Also, a study carried out by Kalejaiye & Adeyemi (2013) submit that organizational misbehaviour occur among non academic staff of universities in Nigeria especially among long tenured workers who take rules with levity because of their years of experience, hence this study intends to discover the influence of absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness on the deviant behaviour of university employees in Nigeria.

## 2. Absenteeism

Various authors have defined absence in different ways. Hanebuth (2008) sees absence as a habitual pattern of absence from a duty or obligation while Fodluck (2007) conceives absence as not showing up for work. Absenteeism

signifies the absence of an employee from work without any explanation, without authorization and intentionally.

Patrick (2013) affirm that unexcused absences lower productivity, results to low morale and is an added stress for other employees. Therefore absenteeism in the workplace affects both the employee and the employer. Some researchers like Hanebuth, (2008), Saez (2014) attest that absenteeism is negatively related to job satisfaction and commitment especially satisfaction with work itself and could be an indication of managerial issues like toxic work environment. The Australian Faculty of Occupational Medicine (2000) viewed absenteeism as an indication of poor performance. Bayram, Gursaka and Bilgel (2009) assert that absenteeism at work is a breach of contract between employer and employee. It is also a production deviance (Robinson & Bennet, 1995) and a manifestation of problems at work (Bentley, 2013).

Several reasons account for absence in the workplace. Hanebuth (2008) noted that some workers are absent due to medical reasons whereas others do not show up because they are not satisfied with their work. In like manner, Personal Finance Report (2013) submits that sickness, bullying and harassment, burnout, stress and low morale, child care and elder care, depression, disengagement, injuries, job hunting and partial shifts could be some of the causes of employees being absent from their duties while CIPD Absence report (2013) saw stress as the most important cause of long term absence.

## 3. Favouritism

Favouritism in the workplace can be harmful and counterproductive. Arnold (2013) describes favouritism as the act of showing partiality toward a privileged individual or group. Ramachander (2013) sees favouritism as occurring when the leader displays preferential treatment towards workers who they are socially connected with to the detriment of other workers and overall performance of the organization. Favouritism can be intentional or unintentional. However, whether intentional or unintentional, it is unlawful, de-motivating, lowers trust, discriminating and can lead to employee deviant behaviours such as employees disliking work, withholding of information, distrust, hatred, bitterness, rumours, jealousy and conflicts, backbiting and undue promotions to the favoured employee (Byars & Rue, 2000; Arnold, 2013). It can also affect safety, quality of work and employee overall productivity (Cuma, 2004).

Favoured employees sometimes may be promoted unduly, may get advances not because of quality of work but because they are preferred by the boss, superior may discuss top official secrets with them and may overlook the mistakes

made by such employees (Ramachander, 2013). He observed that hardworking employees leave the organization especially when they perceive that their hard work will not be recognized, hence the organization is bound to lose quality employees because of favouritism.

## 4. Tardiness

Tardiness has been described by Fodchuk (2007, pg 28) as “arriving late to work or leaving early”. Coming late to work can be harmful to the organization. When people do not show up on time, they are guilty of tardiness. Tardiness is associated with compromised organizational efficiency which negatively affects production. Other workers may try to imitate the tardy employee by coming to work late themselves if not well tamed by the management. Recent study of Gervasini, (2013) has shown that tardiness negatively affects the success of every organization.

## 5. Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant direct relationship between absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness and deviant behaviour among university employees.
2. There is no significant joint contribution of absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness on university employees' deviant behaviour.
3. There is no significant relative contribution of absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness on university employees' deviant behaviour.
4. Gender will not significantly moderate the combined contribution of absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness on deviant behaviour of university employees.

## 6. Methodology

**Research Design:** This study adopted the descriptive design of the *ex-post facto* type. This is because the researchers did not manipulate any of the variables, but rather the researcher observed and described the effect of the already existing independent variables (absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness) on the dependent variable (job deviance).

**Population/Sample Size:** The population for the study comprised of all employees (comprising of academic and non-academic staff) working in tertiary institutions in Ogun State, Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select six universities (3 private and 3 public) that participated in the study. Multi-stage sampling technique was chosen because it is a stage-by-stage system of sampling method. The universities were first selected through stratified

simple random sampling technique, in which the universities were selected based on ownership. The sample was drawn across all categories of workers in the institutions because it is believed that both academic and non-academic staff are prone to job deviance. Specifically, the sample for this study consisted of 600 university employees (300 faculty members and 300 staff).

**Sampling Procedure:** Three hundred questionnaires were given out to all the participating universities. Some proctors were made use of in this quantitative study and in the administration of the questionnaires. Out of the 600 questionnaires sent out, 9 were not properly filled or missed out in the course of retrieval, which invalidate them for the purpose of the study. It can however, be said that there was (578) 96.3% success of questionnaire administration.

## 7. Instruments

**Favouritism Scale (Harris, 2009):** This scale comprised of 13 items. It was used to measure the extent to which university employees perceive the existence of favouritism by management. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which some of their peers get more flexibility, training, recognition and higher salary increments than is common in their departments such as “some of my peers get more flexibility than is common in my department in work arrangements”. The statements are rated on a scale of 5-point likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. In this study, favouritism scale has a coefficient alpha of .84.

**Absenteeism Scale:** This scale consists of 6 items which were self-developed including items like “taken a longer break than you were allowed to take” and the respondents were asked to tick their responses on 5 points ranging from never to everyday on how often they have done each on their present jobs. A cronbach alpha of .80 was obtained and that shows that the scale is suitable for the study.

**Deviance Scale (Bennet & Robinson, 2000)** was used to measure job deviance among university employees. This scale comprised of 28 items. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they have engaged in such activities like “worked on a personal matter instead of working for your employer”. The statements are rated on a scale of 5 ranging from never to every day. Bennet and Robinson (2000) reported that this scale has internal reliability of 0.81, and in this study it has internal reliability of .79.

**Tardiness Scale:** This scale consists of 3 items including item like “came to work late without permission” and the respondents were asked to tick their responses on 5 points ranging from never to everyday on how often they have done

each on their present jobs. A cronbach alpha of .71 was obtained showing it is suitable for this study.

Procedure: Biographical data scale was used to assess the demographic details of the participants while favouritism, absence, deviance and tardiness scales were administered on the sample.

Data analysis: The data obtained were analyzed using simple descriptive statistics analysis, Pearson product Moment Correlation Coefficient and Multiple Regression statistical tools.

## 8. Results and Discussion

**Table 1.** Mean, Standard Deviation, Cronbach’s Alpha and Correlations of employees’ deviant behaviour, absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness.

Variable	Mean	SD	Cronbach’s alpha	No of Items	1	2	3	4
Deviant Behaviour	76.114	9.071	.788	28	1.00			
Absenteeism	15.003	6.109	.801	06	-.312**	1.00		
Favouritism	33.207	11.273	.840	13	.631**	.471**	1.00	
Tardiness	9.465	4.640	.707	03	-.264**	.339**	.298*	1.00

N = 150; \*\* significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); \* significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 1 shows the reliability of all the variables in the study. The Cronbach’s alpha for deviant behaviour scale is .788, absenteeism index is .801, favouritism is .840 and for tardiness scale is .707, which meets the minimum acceptable recommended level. For Correlation, Pearson Correlation matrix was used. It is shown from the Table 1 that an inverse relationship exist between deviant behaviour and absenteeism (-.312) at a significant level (p = .01). Deviant behaviour and

favouritism showed a convergent relationship of .631 at significant level of .01, while a significant negative relationship was found between deviant behaviour and tardiness (-.264). The results also indicated significant positive relationships between absenteeism and favouritism (.471), absenteeism and tardiness (.339), as well as tardiness and favouritism (.298).

**Table 2.** Model summary of the regression analysis for the combined influence of absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness to the prediction of university employees’ deviant behavior.

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	SE	Change Statistics				
					R <sup>2</sup> Change	F Change	d f 1	d f 2	Sig. F Change
Predictor Variables	.441	.194	.194	13.061	.194	33.478	3	574	.021

a. Predictors: (Constant), absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness  
 b. Dependent Variable: university employees’ deviant behaviour

The results in Table 2 indicated that with all the predictor variables (absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness) in the regression model jointly predicted university employees’ deviant behaviour (R = .441; R<sup>2</sup> = .194; Adj. R<sup>2</sup> = .194; F (3, 574) = 33.478 p <.05). This showed that all the predictor variables accounted for 19.4% of the variance in the university employees’ deviant behaviour. The null hypothesis

which stated that there is no significant joint contribution of absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness on university employees’ deviant behaviour was rejected by this finding. This implies that there is a significant joint contribution of absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness on university employees’ deviant behaviour.

**Table 3.** Beta coefficients and t ratio for relative contributions of absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness to the prediction of university employees’ deviant behaviour.

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-ratio	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)		
(Constant)	3.409	.615		8.861	.000
Absenteeism	.266	.135	.298	4.307	.007
Favouritism	.418	.038	.472	9.113	.000
Tardiness	-.167	.027	-.231	-3.001	.000

\*Significant at 0.05 level  
 a. Dependent Variable: university employees’ deviant behaviour

The results in Table 3 revealed the strength of causation of the predictor variable on the criterion variable. The most potent predictor of university employees’ deviant behaviour among the predictor variables of the study is favouritism (β

= .472; t = 9.115; p <.05). Absenteeism is the next potent factor (β= .298; t = 4.307; p <.05), and lastly by tardiness (β= -.231; t = 3.001; p <.05) in the prediction of university employees’ deviant behaviour. The hypothesis of no relative



contribution of absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness on university employees' deviant behaviour was rejected by this finding. This implies that there is a significant relative

contribution of absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness on university employees' deviant behaviour, while favouritism was found to be the most potent predictor among the three.

**Table 4.** Model Summary of the multiple regression analysis of the moderating effect of gender on the influence of absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness to the prediction of university employees' deviant behaviour.

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	SE	Change Statistics				
					R <sup>2</sup> Change	F Change	d f 1	d f 2	Sig. F Change
Gender									
Male	.307	.094	.088	10.771	.388	19.907	4	248	.013
Female	.511	.261	.247	18.002	.247	8.543	4	322	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness

b. Dependent Variable: university employees' deviant behaviour

The results in Table 4 indicated that with all the predictor variables (absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness) entered into the regression model at once, there was a significant prediction of deviant behaviour among male and female employees in academia. For male employees ( $R = .307$ ;  $R^2 = .094$ ;  $\text{Adj } R^2 = .088$ ;  $F_{(4,248)} = 19.907$ ;  $p < .05$ ), while for female employees, the values are ( $R = .511$ ;  $R^2 = .261$ ;  $\text{Adj } R^2 = .247$ ;  $F_{(4,322)} = 8.543$ ;  $p < .05$ ). This implies that there was combined contribution of absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness to the prediction of deviant behaviour among both male and female employees in academia.

## 9. Discussions

The first hypothesis stated that there is no significant direct relationship between the absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness and deviant behaviour among university employees. The outcome of this finding revealed a significant direct relationship among the variables either positively or negatively. An inverse relationship exist between deviant behaviour, absenteeism (-.312), and tardiness (-.264). The results on the direct relationship between the absenteeism, tardiness and deviant behaviour is in tandem with the previous findings that feelings and act of absenteeism and tardiness lead to counterproductive work behaviors in a sense that they cause passivity (Martinko et al, 2002), low levels of commitment, and a lack of effort (Fox et al., 2012). Also, Gervasini, (2013) has shown that tardiness negatively affects the success of every organization.

Deviant behaviour and favouritism showed a convergent relationship. Also, significant positive relationship was found between absenteeism and favouritism, absenteeism and tardiness, as well as tardiness and favouritism. The implication of this is that when employees perceive feelings of favouritism, they can attribute the feeling of favouritism to be exclusion. When this happens, they may tend to experience feelings of anger and frustration, leading to retaliating behaviours such as absenteeism, tardiness, and even aggression and harassment. This result is in line with that of Gerber and Wheeler (2009) who concluded that

exclusion makes individuals feel bad about themselves, and rejected individuals reported feelings of worthlessness and incompetence.

Hypothesis two predicted no significant joint contribution of absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness on university employees' deviant behaviour. Results showed that all the predictor variables accounted for 19.4% of the variance in the university employees' deviant behaviour. The outcome of hypothesis two corroborates the previous findings of Chirasha and Mahapa (2012) and Moti (2010) that university employees engage in deviant behaviours while Mazni and Roziah (2011) confirmed that it is more evident in lower class employees since they commit most of their free times at getting back at whoever that offends them. Also, a study carried out by Kalejaiye and Adeyemi (2013) submit that organizational misbehaviour occurs among non academic staff of universities.

Hypothesis three predicted that there is no significant relative contribution of absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness on university employees' deviant behaviour. The finding reveals significant relative contribution of absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness on university employees' deviant behaviour, while favouritism was found to be the most potent predictor among the three. This is in line with earlier submission of Ramachander (2013) that perceptions of inequality have the tendency to increase employee's antisocial behaviours. Holinger and Clark (1983) affirmed that when employees feel that others are favoured more than them, they are more likely to engage in acts against their organizations. Hence, favouritism is one of the major causes of workplace deviance. Absenteeism also contributed to deviant behaviour of employees. The study of Hanebuth (2008) is in support that absence is negatively related to job satisfaction and commitment. Based on this view, it is evident that a worker who is dissatisfied may engage in some deviant behaviour like not showing up for work in order to get back at the organization. Also, Saez (2014) saw absence as an indication of toxic work environment while Thomas (2010) submits that absence is a mildly workplace deviance and a potential source of workplace conflict.

Furthermore, the outcome of hypothesis four revealed a significant prediction of deviant behaviour among male and female employees in academia. This implies that there was combined contribution of absenteeism, favouritism and tardiness to the prediction of deviant behaviour among both male and female employees in academia. The finding of the study tallies with Fagbohunge, Akinbode, and Ayodeji (2012) who reported that between thirty-three and seventy-five per cent of all workers have engaged in one form of deviant behaviour or the other. In two different studies, Griffin and Lopez (2004), Charisha and Mahapa (2011) observed that all individuals in workplaces have the tendency of engaging in destructive behaviours.

## 10. Implications of the Study

Findings from this research have important implications for personnel management and evaluation. This is because, favouritism is counterproductive and could lead to lower employee morale and could be de-motivating to hard working employees especially when they feel their hard work is not rewarded. Managers should not favour any employee but recognize and reward hard work based on job performance. There should be good and objective tools and criteria for assessment and evaluation that is transparent and understood by all. This will go a long way in reducing employee deviance. Absenteeism which is seen as “mildly deviant” work behaviour should be checked and controlled since it can lead to more serious conflicts. To achieve this, absence policy should be put in place by organizations to check and control employee wilful absences.

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