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## **Examination of Gender Roles in Workplace Deviance among Local Government Employees in Akoko Area of Ondo State, Nigeria**

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Findings on gender and workplace deviance have been mixed and inconclusive; hence, there is a need to further examine gender differences in workplace deviance, especially in Local Governments where employees' deviant behaviours seem to be highly prevalent. Thus, this study examined gender difference in workplace deviance among Local Government employees in Nigeria. Two hundred employees (male = 100; female = 100) were selected from the four Local Government Areas in Akoko Ondo State, Nigeria using a purposive sampling technique. Their ages ranged from 21 to 57 years ( $M = 35.99$ ;  $SD = 11.04$ ). The participants responded to Workplace Deviance Scale. Results of the independent t-test revealed that male Local Government employees showed higher tendencies to exhibit workplace deviant behaviours ( $M = 64.12$ ) than their female counterparts ( $M = 22.30$ ). Based on this finding, we suggest that more emphasis should be placed on addressing the issue of workplace deviance among male public sector employees than their female counterparts.

**Keywords:** gender, Local Government employees, workplace deviance

Workplace deviance refers to voluntary behaviour that violates significant organisational norms and in so doing threatens the well-being of the organization, its members, or both (Robinson & Bennett, 1995, p. 556). Workplace deviance is believed to be voluntary behaviour because employees can either lack the motivation to conform to and/or become motivated to violate normative expectations of the social context (Bennett & Robinson, 2000 cited in Hakan & Jamel, 2013). Workplace deviance takes a variety of forms, including, but not limited to fraud, theft, bullying, stealing and damaging companies properties, wasting time/or materials, habitual lateness, absenteeism, neglecting superiors' instructions, publicly embarrassing one's supervisors, spreading rumor, and sexual harassment (Gruys & Sackett, 2003; Penny & Spector, 2005).

Robinson and Bennett (1995) classified workplace deviance into two major types: organizational deviance and interpersonal deviance. Organizational deviance consists

of acts directed against the organisation, such as sabotaging equipment, theft, stealing and wasting resources etc. (Bennett *et al.*, 2000). Interpersonal deviance on the other hand, consists of acts that inflict harm on co-workers, such as verbal harassment, aggression, assault and spreading rumors (Robinson *et al.*, 1995).

Today, the study of workplace deviance is increasingly becoming a prominent concern of both practitioners and organisational researchers in Nigeria because of its increasing prevalence in most public sector organisations (Olabimitan & Alausa, 2014). Although, no reliable statistics exist on the percentage of workers who have engaged in workplace deviance in Nigeria, however, it is clearly evident from the frequent newspaper reports of corruption and fraud committed by public sector employees and government officials that public sector organisations in Nigeria are not exempted from the incident of workplace deviance (Olabimitan *et al.*, 2014). Moreover, recent research reports have shown that deviant behaviours such as

habitual lateness to work, absenteeism, theft, fraud, bribery, corruption, embezzlement, misappropriation of public fund, misuse of government property, abuse of power and office, and sabotage pervade most public sector organisations and have been constituting serious threat to delivery of quality service in most Nigerian public sector organisations (Fagbohungebe, Akinbode, & Ayodeji, 2012a; Osezua, Abah, & Daniel, 2009).

The prevalence of workplace deviance could be extremely harmful and detrimental to public sector organisations if it continues unabated (Dunlop & Lee, 2004; Robinson & Greenberg, 1998). For instance, Bowling and Gruys (2010), Hollinger and Adams (2010), and Jones (2009) reported that many organisations lose billions of dollars every year due to workplace deviance such as theft, sabotage, counterproductive work behaviour, etc. Besides, workplace deviance has been associated with low productivity, decreased performance, time wasting, and damage to the organization's reputation (Peterson, 2002). Employees who are victims of workplace deviance are likely to experience stress-related problems, low morale, suffer physical and psychological pains, and are more likely to leave or quit the organisation (Appelbaum, Laconi, & Matousek 2007; Penny & Spector, 2005).

Individual characteristics such as gender may influence the extent to which public sector employees engage in deviant behaviours at workplace. Gender is a state of being male or female with reference to social or cultural differences (Adebayo & Osagu, 2013). Literature review on gender and workplace deviance revealed that while there is a plethora of research evidence on the relationship between gender and workplace deviance in America, United Kingdom, Europe, and some Asian countries (for review see Anwar, Sarwar, Awan, & Arif, 2011; Santos & Eger, 2014; Wilkowski, Hartung, Crowe, & Chai, 2012), few studies (such as Akinbode, 2009; Fagbohungebe *et al.*, 2012a; Olabimitan *et al.*, 2014; Ogungbamila & Udegbe, 2014) have examined gender difference in workplace deviance in Nigeria. Besides, the findings of the few available studies are mixed and inconclusive.

For instance, Adebayo (2005) found that male police officers displayed more unethical behaviour than female police. In like manner, Ojedokun (2008) found that male police personnel reported a positive attitude towards unethical behaviour while their female counterparts reported a negative attitude towards unethical behaviour. Similarly, Olabimitan and Alausa (2014) found that male nurses in public hospitals in some Local Government Areas in Lagos manifested higher deviant behaviour than their female counterparts.

However, in a study conducted among employees in some industries in Lagos metropolis, Fagbohungebe *et al.* (2012a) found that female employees at both perceived controlled work environment and permissive work environment reported higher workplace deviant behaviour than their male counterparts. In another study, Faghohungebe, Akinbode, and Ayodeji (2012b) reported that fraudulent behaviour was higher among male employees than among females in some public and private organisations in Lagos metropolis. Ogungbamila *et al.* (2014) found no gender differences in employees' tendencies to engage in corruption and interpersonal violence but reported that females who perceived organisational injustice exhibited as much organisational revenge, interpersonal revenge, interpersonal violence, and corrupt tendencies as males who perceived organisational injustice. Alolo (2006) found that male and female employees showed similar favourable attitudes toward workplace deviance such as corruption, arguing that males were likely to engage in corruption if they perceived that it would lead to justice and fair-play while females may have higher level of tolerance for corruption if they perceived that it would provide opportunity to take care of more people.

Going by the mixed and inconclusive results on gender difference in workplace deviance, there is a need to further investigate gender difference in workplace deviance, especially in Local Government Areas where employees' deviant behaviours seem to be highly prevalent (Ogungbamila *et al.*, 2014). Hence, the present study examined gender difference in workplace

deviance among employees in the four Local Governments in Akoko Areas of Ondo State, Nigeria. It is hoped that the findings of this study will resolve the conflicting results in gender-workplace deviance literature and help Local Government managers identify the gender category that are more likely to exhibit higher workplace deviant behaviours. This would consequently help them design appropriate intervention strategies that would reduce workplace deviance between the gender categories.

#### *Hypothesis*

1. There will be significant gender difference in workplace deviance among Local Government employees.

### **Method**

#### *Design and Participants*

This is an ex-post facto survey research. The dependent variable is workplace deviance while the independent variable is gender. Two hundred (200) employees purposively selected from the four Local Governments in Akoko Areas of Ondo State, Nigeria, participated in the study. The participants comprised 100 (50.0%) males and 100 (50.0%) females. Their ages ranged between 21 and 57 years ( $M = 35.99$ ;  $SD = 11.04$ ). Regarding marital status, 77 (38.5%) of the participants were single, 117 (58.5%) were married, 2 (1.0%) were divorced while 4 (2.0%) were widowed. In terms of academic qualification, 21 (10.5%) of the participants had Secondary School Certificate, 14 (7.0%) had National Certificate in Education, 47 (23.5%) had Ordinary National Diploma, 45 (22.5%) had Higher National Diploma, 59 (29.5%) had first degree, and 14 (7%) had Masters Degree. Amongst them, 115 (77.5%) were Christians, 41 (20.5%) were Muslims while 4 (2.0%) reported to be worshipping other religions. The length of the working experience ranged between 3 and 11 years with a Mean of 6.36 years ( $SD = 2.08$ ).

#### *Measures*

*Workplace Deviance:* Workplace deviance was measured using Workplace Deviance Scale developed by Bennett *et al.* (2000). The

scale was designed to measure the extent to which an employee engaged in workplace deviant behaviours that are harmful to the organization or other employees. The scale was rated on a 7-point scale (1 = Never; 7 = Daily). Twelve-item on the scale measure deviant acts that target the organization. Seven-item measures deviant acts that target members of the organization. Bennett *et al.* (2000) reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .81, and .78 for the organizational deviance and interpersonal deviance subscales respectively. Among Nigerian sample, Olabimitan *et al.* (2014) obtained a Cronbach's reliability coefficient of .77 and .75 for the two subscales. In this study, Cronbach's alpha of .71 and .77 were obtained for the two subscales respectively while a Cronbach's alpha .94 was obtained for the overall scale. High score on the scale implied high workplace deviant behaviour while low score stated otherwise.

#### *Procedure*

Prior to the administration of the questionnaire, permission was obtained from the human personnel managers of each of the Local Governments that participated in the study. The consent of the prospective participants was sought after a brief explanation of the purpose of the research. Using a purposive sampling technique, those who consented were given a copy of the questionnaire, and in a bid to reduce self-report bias, confidentiality and anonymity were provided through a highlighted sentence at the top of the questionnaire that asked the participants not to identify themselves in any way. A total of two hundred and fifty (250) copies of questionnaire were administered, 218 were collected and 200 were properly filled and found usable for the analysis, yielding a response rate of 87.2%.

### **Results**

Independent t-test was used to analyse the data to determine gender difference in workplace deviant behaviours. The results are presented in Table 1 and 2.

**Table 1:** Summary of independent t-test on Gender Difference in Organisational Deviance

Dependent Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Organisational deviance	Male	111	60.02	19.33	198	34.10	<.01
	Female	89	28.48	8.32			

As shown in Table 1, there was a significant gender difference in organisational deviance ( $t(198) = 34.10, p < .01$ ), such that male Local Government employees ( $M = 60.02$ )

showed higher tendencies to exhibit organisational deviant behaviour than their female counterparts ( $M = 28.48$ ).

**Table 2:** Summary of independent t-test on Gender Difference in Interpersonal Deviance

Dependent Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Interpersonal deviance	Male	85	59.75	20.12	198	28.53	<.05
	Female	115	33.27	10.64			

Table 2 revealed that there was a significant gender difference in interpersonal deviance ( $t(198) = 28.53, p < .05$ ), such that male Local Government employees ( $M = 59.75$ ) showed higher tendencies to exhibit interpersonal deviant behaviour than their female counterparts ( $M = 33.27$ ).

in public industries in Lagos metropolis reported higher fraudulent behaviour than their female counterparts.

That male Local Government employees showed higher tendencies to exhibit workplace deviant behaviour than their female counterparts is not surprising considering Akoko culture and societal norms. Akoko, like other town in Ondo State, is a patriarchal society. The socialization of the child emphasises different roles and expectations for both sexes. Males in Akoko are generally socialized to be more competitive, aggressive and vengeful and less submissive, tolerant, and nurturing compared with their female counterparts who are socialized to be soft, less competitive and aggressive, more submissive, and dependent on their male counterparts.

**Discussion**

This study examined gender difference in workplace deviance among employees in the Local Governments Areas in Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria. As hypothesized, result showed that there was a significant gender difference in workplace deviance, suggesting that male Local Governments employees showed higher tendencies to exhibit workplace deviance than their female counterparts. This finding contradicts the finding of Fagbohunge *et al.* (2012a) who found that female employees in some public and private industries in Lagos metropolis exhibited higher workplace deviance than males. The differences in findings may be attributed to the settings and States where the studies were conducted.

Since cultural and societal norms may be carried to workplace due to *spill-over effects*, these cultural norms which expect men to be less tolerant and express anger against any perceive unfairness/injustice than women may determine why male employees exhibited higher workplace deviant behaviour than their female counterparts (Ogungbamila *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, that male Local Government employee reported higher tendency to exhibit workplace deviance than their female counterparts might be connected with their cultural system that condones and promotes revenge and aggressive behaviour more in males than in females.

However, the result supported the finding of Ojedokun (2008) who found that male police personnel reported a positive attitude towards unethical work behaviour. The finding is also in tandem with the findings of Adebayo (2005) who found that male police officers displayed more unethical work behaviours than females. The result also lent credence to the findings of Fagbohunge *et al.* (2012b) who found that male employees

Moreover, the prevalent of workplace deviant behaviours in males could be

explained by the male sex hormone called testosterone—which is associated with an aggressive personality. The female sex hormones (oestrogen and progesterone) on the other hand, are associated with a more passive personality.

Apart from biological factors, religiosity may explain why male employees in this setting showed higher tendencies to exhibit workplace deviance than their female counterparts. The researchers interactions with some male and female Local Government employees and observation of religion events in the research setting showed that women are highly religious than men. Due to their consistent exposure to religious teachings, women in these areas are more likely to be faithful, obedient, humble, kind, tolerant, and compassionate. Since according to *spill-over effect*, religious belief can be carried to the workplace, female employees in these Local Government Areas are more likely to show lower tendencies to exhibit workplace deviant behaviours than their male counterparts who seem to be less religious. Unfortunately, the role of religiosity in the relationship between gender and workplace deviance was not captured in the present study; hence the need for future studies to pay attention to this.

#### *Conclusion and Limitations of the Study*

In conclusion, this study has established that male employees in the Local Government Areas of Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria reported higher tendencies to exhibit workplace deviant behaviour than their female counterparts. Based on this finding, we recommended that Local Government managers should place more emphasis on addressing the issue of workplace deviance among male public sector employees than their female counterparts.

In spite of its contributions, this study was not without short-comings. The major short-coming was that the study only relied on self-report measures of workplace deviance. This study may be prone to common method variance. For instance, females may under-report workplace deviance because of fear of being punished. It may, therefore, be beneficial if future studies use a non-self-report measure (see Stewart, Bing, Davison, Woehr, & McIntyre,

2009). The small sample size utilized and the exclusive restriction to Local Government workers only may affect the generalization of the finding to other public sector employees in Nigeria.

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