




Organisational justice and deviance in academia: Is there a moderating effect of personality?



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Orientation: Social exchange theory (SET) posits that employees reciprocate injustice with workplace deviance. However, studies reveal this may not always be the case because of the differences in employees' personality traits.

Research purpose: To examine the moderating role of Honesty-Humility, Emotionality and Agreeableness (H-HEA) of the HEXACO personality domain on the relationship between organisational justice (OJ) and workplace deviance among employees of selected public universities in South-West Nigeria.

Motivation for the study: It becomes imperative to study workplace deviance behaviour (WDB) because of its costs and prevalence in the organisation. Hence, this study integrates the situational and individual antecedents of workplace deviance, using the HEXACO personality domain to moderate the relationship between OJ and personality.

Research approach/design and method: The study adopted a quantitative approach; a survey was conducted among 572 employees of three public universities in Nigeria. Data collected were analysed using partial least square structural equation modelling.

Main findings: The findings revealed that WDB reduces with OJ and increases with injustice. Essentially, the moderating effect of E-HEXACO selected by the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is found to be insignificant.

Practical/managerial implications: The study recommends that university management and government alike should ensure justice in the public universities as this helps to reduce WDB.

Contribution/value-add: This study proposes that employees' personality traits will determine whether they will reciprocate feelings of injustice with deviant behaviour. This study has contributed to the literature by examining the HEXACO personality traits, which are scarcely being examined in Nigerian literature.

Keywords: workplace deviance; personality traits; organisational justice; public universities; Nigeria.

Introduction

A voluntary behaviour that violates significant organisational norms and, by doing so, threatens the well-being of the co-workers, subordinates, supervisors and/or the organisation is termed deviant behaviour (Bennett et al., 2018). Involvement in workplace deviance behaviour (WDB) could either be because of motivation to violate organisational norms or motivation to conform to them (Kaplan, 1975). It involves a wide continuum of behaviours such as theft, sexual harassment, bullying, cyberloafing, withdrawing efforts, pretending to be sick when not, absenteeism, gossip and verbal abuse, among others, which are harmful to the employees, customers and/or the organisation (Bennett et al., 2018; Mansor et al., 2018; Obalade & Mtembu, 2023). Additionally, these behaviours are detrimental to the interests and goals of other individuals in the organisation (Osibanjo et al., 2015). It becomes imperative to study WDB because of its costs and prevalence in the organisation. Specifically, organisations have been putting up various measures to curb it, as it is an undesirable behaviour that management does not want any of their employees to exhibit (Obalade & Akeke, 2020). Lawrence and Robinson (2007), highlighting its prevalence in the organisation, noted that about 35% – 75% employees have exhibited behaviours such as sabotage, theft, destruction of properties or goods, and absence from work, among others.

Therefore, WDB has drawn the attention of practitioners, government and academics to examining its underlying cause so that efforts put in managing WDB would be effective when the underlying

cause is known and addressed (Obalade & Arogundade, 2019; Robbins & Judge, 2007). Despite the adverse effects of these acts on other employees, the organisation and the society at large, deviant acts have been frequently reported among employees of public universities in Nigeria. Idoniboye-Obu (2015) noted that at one point or the other, every stakeholder in Nigeria's higher education has been accused of corruption. Specifically, deviant acts, such as sex and/or money for grades, absenteeism, admission fraud, forging of certificates, among others, have been reported among staff of public universities in Nigeria (Igbe et al., 2017; Obalade, Obalade & Mtembu, 2023; Premium Times, 2017; Shamsudin et al., 2012). In understanding the ripple effects of these acts, Idoniboye-Obu (2015) found that the higher education institutions have also contributed to students' corruption. Sympathetically, these students are believed to be the future leaders of the nation.

Therefore, it becomes needful to examine the antecedents of these deviant acts as its effects on the nation may be said to be adverse if these acts are not curtailed or eradicated. Scant research has been conducted on this interacting effect on workplace deviance. Specifically, few has been conducted in Nigeria. Subsequently, this study integrates the situational and individual antecedents of workplace deviance, using the HEXACO personality domain to moderate the relationship between organisational justice (OJ) and personality. Finally, the study proposes that employee personality traits will moderate the relationship between OJ and workplace deviance.

Hypotheses development

Two research hypotheses were developed and investigated in this study. The hypotheses are as follows:

- H1:** Organisational justice is negatively related to workplace deviance behaviour.
- H2:** Employee personality traits will moderate the relationship between organisational justice and workplace deviance behaviour.

Interactional effect on workplace deviance has been suggested as another better way of predicting workplace deviance. Research on workplace deviance suggests the need to study the effect of the interaction between situational factors, such as perceived organisational support, leadership, OJ, among others (El-Akremiti et al., 2010; Ifeanyichukwu et al., 2022), and personal factors, comprising personality traits, philosophy or value held, individual differences and attitudes (Rogojan, 2009) on workplace deviance. The argument is that studying the interaction would provide better explanation for workplace deviance than using just one of the antecedents. Until the interactional effect was introduced, researchers have often argued that one of the two was better than the other (Appelbaum et al., 2005), but the interactional theorists suggest that considering the interactions between these two antecedents would contribute to understanding the predictors of workplace deviance (Henle, 2005; Sackett & DeVore, 2001). Specifically, Sackett

and DeVore (2001) noted that the two domains are crucial to the understanding of counterproductive behaviour. Personality is an important predictor of workplace deviance (Colbert et al., 2004; Pletzer et al., 2019). Personality generates unwanted behaviours because it influences employees' perceptions, attribution, emotional reactions, assessment of the environment and self-control or control of aggression (Spector, 2011). Despite the existence of numerous personality traits, the Big-Five (conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness to experience and extraversion) and HEXACO personality traits (H – honesty–humility, E – emotionality, X – extraversion, A – agreeableness, C – conscientiousness and O – openness to experience) have often been used by researchers to predict workplace deviance (Anglim & O'Connor, 2018; Berry et al., 2007; Henle, 2005; Obalade et al., 2023a; Pletzer et al., 2019). The HEXACO personality traits differ from its Big-Five counterpart in the honesty–humility (H-H), emotionality (E) and agreeableness (A) domains (Obalade et al., 2023a; Pletzer et al., 2019). Literature has affirmed the H-HEA personality traits especially the H-H domain to better predict workplace deviance (Ashton & Lee, 2007, 2008; Obalade et al., 2023a; Pletzer et al., 2019). Hence, this study will be examining personality traits using the H-HEA personality traits. Despite the direct relationship found between personality and workplace deviance, it has been suggested that personality possibly plays a more indirect or moderating role in explaining employees' responses to provocations which could arise out of injustice in the workplace (Aquino et al., 2004; Robinson & Bennett, 1997). Specifically, Bennett and Robinson (2003) suggest that personality be examined from a broader angle. Consequently, personality has been used to moderate the relationship between many situational variables and workplace deviance (Henle, 2005).

Literature review

Organisational justice and workplace deviance behaviour

Organisational justice (OJ) explains the perception of fairness (Colquitt et al., 2001). Organisational justice explains how employees perceive fairness in their outcome, the procedures, the treatment received and how it is being communicated (Osibanjo et al., 2015). Justice is important to individuals because the treatment they receive communicates their value in the organisation and/or among groups they belong (Lind & Tyler, 1988). It is evident in literature that perception of fairness impacts employees' behaviour and attitude and results in significant organisational outcomes (Wu & Wang, 2008). Additionally, employees who experience unfair treatment at work either from the superiors or the organisation have a higher tendency to exhibit deviant behaviour in the workplace (Abbasi et al., 2020, 2022; Dora & Azim, 2019). Abbasi et al. (2022) found that OJ has a negative impact on WDB. In the same vein, Ifeanyichukwu et al. (2022) posit that organisational functionality depends on its members' perception of the fairness of its practices. They further argued that to encourage productive behaviour among employees, the organisation needs to ensure that its members have a sense of fairness.

Based on the equity theory (Adams, 1965), employees make a comparison of the ratio of their outcome to their inputs. Inequity occurs when employees perceive that their inputs exceed their outcomes, which results into feelings of anger and frustration. As a result, attempt is made towards restoring equity (Colquitt et al., 2001).

Moderating effect of personality on organisational justice and workplace deviance behaviour

An individual personality trait refers to:

[T]he set of psychological traits and mechanisms within the individual that are organised and relatively enduring and that influence his or her interactions with and adaptations to, the intrapsychic, physical and social environments. (p. 4)

Larsen and Buss (2009) suggest that personality influences the patterns of feelings, thoughts and behaviours of individuals, and these patterns are relative. The ability of an individual's personality trait to influence their behaviour across varying circumstances has made it to be a relevant topic across disciplines (Anglim & O'Connor, 2019). In addition, examining the role of personality traits on workplace deviance is vital. Longpré and Turner (2024) found that personality traits at work and outside were highly correlated. The link among personality, OJ and workplace deviance has been based on the argument that an employee who is grieved or feels an inequity in the way they are treated often attempts to retaliate with an act that is harmful to the organisation (Henle, 2005). Expressing of grievances by resorting to deviant behaviour is rooted in social exchange theory (SET). However, some studies (De Lara & Verano-Tacoronte, 2007; Henle, 2005; Holtz & Harold, 2013) have revealed that not all individuals will reciprocate such feelings with deviant behaviour. Hence, whether an employee will react defiantly or not is a function of many variables. These variables entail perceived normative conflict, psychological factors, interpersonal justice, value and orientation and personality traits (De Lara & Verano-Tacoronte, 2007; Henle, 2005; Holtz & Harold, 2013). Of the aforementioned factors is the personality trait, which has been affirmed to be an important predictor of workplace deviance and report a higher criterion-related validity relative to other predictors (Berry et al., 2007).

Organisational justice constitutes a key situational factor that personality has been used to moderate. Greenberg (1990) noted that OJ is a bedrock for the effective running of organisation as well as ensuring that employees' personal needs are met. In addition, Cropanzano et al. (2001) suggested various reasons why employees join an organisation, such as the desire to satisfy their economic needs and/or to satisfy their socioemotional needs, among others. Decisions relating to these needs and employees' experience during these processes are of utmost importance to the employee (Colquitt, 2001). According to SET, individuals attempt to ensure that their needs are met and want their organisation where they work to prioritise their welfare. When these

needs and expectations are not met, such individuals are grieved or feel an inequity in the way they are treated and oftentimes seek ways of balancing the inequity perceived. One of the ways of doing this is to involve in acts that are detrimental to the organisation or individuals within the organisation (Henle, 2005). Recent studies have revealed that not all individuals will reciprocate such feelings with deviant behaviour. For instance, Wenzel and Okimoto (2010) opine that not reacting to unfair treatment could yield the victim of injustice greater power. In the same vein, Holtz and Harold (2013) noted that not reacting to unfair treatment can help restore desired justice balance and could even be as effective as when such individual retaliates. These perceptions vary among individuals depending on their personality difference. For instance, a person who acts before thinking would not think that keeping quiet could restore inequity perceived. This therefore points out that an individual personality trait to a large extent influences involvement in workplace deviance regardless of the injustice perceived.

In this context, Colbert et al. (2004) hypothesised that deviant behaviour as a response to the negative perception of the work situation may be influenced by individual personality trait, implying that individuals may be involved in workplace deviance not only when they have a negative perception of their work situation but also when their personality traits do not constrain them from engaging in deviant behaviour. Henle (2005) examined how OJ and personality interact to predict workplace deviance. Measures of personality traits used were impulsivity and socialisation. These two personality traits were used in moderating the relationship between OJ and workplace deviance. The findings of the study revealed that procedural and distributive justice failed to interact with both personality traits, while interactional justice did. As the forms of personality only interacted with the interactional form of justice, this study proposes that if other measures (H-HEA) of personality are used, it may interact with more forms of justice.

Colbert et al. (2004) examined the interactional effect of the individual and situational factors as predictors of workplace deviance. The individual factor considered in the study was personality trait, while developmental environment, OJ and perceived organisational support were the situational factors considered. It was hypothesised that positive perception of the work environment will be negatively related to workplace deviance and found support for this hypothesis. Furthermore, to test the interactional effect, three personality traits were used to moderate the relationship between the work situation variables and workplace deviance relationship. It was found that low emotional stability or conscientiousness strongly influenced the relationship between developmental environment and organisational deviance, while low agreeableness strongly influenced the relationship between perceived organisational support and interpersonal deviance. A study by Malik and Malik (2023) emphasised the significance of organisational support and environment in efforts to minimise deviant behaviours; they also mentioned that

organisations that create environments signalling to employees that they are valued and well cared for have a greater chance of experiencing fewer cases of organisational deviance. Elgammal et al. (2003) in a study conducted on nurses found that there was a positive statistically significant correlation between nurses' perceived organisational support and their perspective of deviant behaviours at workplace. In Nigeria, Enwereuzor et al. (2017) examined the role of personality (agreeableness and conscientiousness) in moderating emotional exhaustion and workplace deviance relationship among teachers in the South-East region. Using a hierarchical moderated regression model, they found that the two personality traits examined negatively predicted workplace deviance, although agreeableness predicted workplace deviance beyond conscientiousness (24% as compared to 19%, respectively). Furthermore, it was noted that employees who are low in agreeableness have the tendency to engage in workplace deviance when they are emotionally exhausted, unlike a conscientious person, thus concluding that emotional exhaustion–workplace deviance relationship was only moderated by agreeableness. This study, although conducted in Nigeria, differs from the present study. Firstly, the HEXACO model of personality was not used, implying that vital personality trait, such as the honesty-humility, which has been found to be a significant predictor of workplace deviance, was omitted. Secondly, the emotional exhaustion–workplace deviance relationship was examined as opposed to OJ and workplace deviance that this study examines. Thirdly, the study was not carried out in a university but in a secondary school.

Conclusively, studies have been conducted on the relationship between personality trait and workplace deviance and found that personality trait has a relationship with workplace deviance. However, very few studies have examined its moderating role in the OJ and workplace deviance relationship (Henle, 2005; Khattak et al., 2019), while these few studies used other domains or models of personality trait, other than HEXACO, which does not include the H-H trait. Consequent upon this, this study aims to moderate the OJ and workplace deviance relationship using the three HEXACO traits (H-H, agreeableness and emotionality) that have been affirmed to differ from the Big-Five personality trait.

Theoretical frame

Cognitive social theory (CST) forms the theoretical framework for this study, as it links the independent and dependent variables. This theory was propounded by Bandura and Walter (1963) and proposes that 'personal factors, such as moral thought and affective self-reactions, moral conduct and environmental factors all operate as interacting determinants that influence each other in determining outcomes' (Bandura, 1986, p. 2). This theory helps to combine different factors (internal and external) to explain employee behaviour by postulating that both individual and situational factors operate as interacting factors that influence behaviour, thereby forming a triadic relationship (Otaye-Ebede et al., 2020).

The theory lays emphasis on the consideration of the interaction between individuals and situations (Mischel, 1973). It views personality as contextual because individuals' interpretation and response to various situations are influenced by it. This interaction has an influence on how an individual perceives a situation, which will in turn influence behaviour (Henle, 2005). Sincero (2012) notes that an intellectual process is needed for an individual to repeat a positive behaviour and asserts that the environment (social and physical environment) of an individual influences the behaviour, just as the behaviour of an individual can influence the environment. This theory points to the bidirectional interaction existing among the factors that influence workplace deviance. Cognitive social theory explicitly explains why individuals in the same situation may behave differently. Researchers (Henle, 2005; Holtz & Harold, 2013; Khattak et al., 2019) have used the CST to explain the interaction between the individual and situational factors predicting deviant behaviour.

Using CST to explain the proposed hypothesis, it explains that although literature suggests that when employees perceive that they are being unfairly treated either by the organisation or the co-worker, they tend to retaliate by involving in acts that are detrimental to the organisation and/or co-workers. However, CST explains that when the personality trait of an employee interacts with the negative feeling resulting from being unfairly treated, it could influence the desire to retaliate with acts that are detrimental to the organisation and/or the co-workers.

This study infers from this theory that employee's perception of justice will influence their involvement in workplace deviance, but when personality interacts with this assumed relationship, it is assumed that the impact will be moderated because of the differences in individual perception on a situation. The major criticism of this theory initially was its inability to include personality, but recent research (Henle, 2005; Holtz & Harold, 2013; Khattak et al., 2019) has incorporated personality, which this study also considers.

Research design

Study design and sampling

The positivism research philosophies, which involve the formulation of hypotheses and statistical analysis (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016), were used in achieving the objectives of this study. Hence, quantitative data were collected. Employees (administrative and academic) of three selected public universities in South-West Nigeria were the target population for this study. The population was selected using purposive non-probability sampling. The selection criteria included the establishment of each university within the last 10 years. Additionally, because deviant behaviour is being examined in this study, each of these selected universities must have had its employees' involvement in workplace deviance reported on social media and/or newspapers. Specifically, the three universities are Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti (EKSU), Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA), and the University of Lagos (UNILAG) (Folarin, 2019; Obalade & Mtembu, 2023; Sahara Reporter, 2017, 2019) (See Tables 1 & 2).

TABLE 1: Population distribution.

| S/N | Universities | Academic | Non-academic | Total |
|-----|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1 | EKSU | 555 | 1500 | 2055 |
| 2 | FUTA | 587 | 1413 | 2000 |
| 3 | UNILAG | 813 | 2550 | 3363 |
| - | Total | 1955 | 5463 | 7418 |

Source: Obalade, G. (2022)

EKSU, Ekiti State University; FUTA, Federal University of Technology; UNILAG, University of Lagos; S/N, serial number.

TABLE 2: Distribution of sample size among the universities.

| S/N | Universities | Academic | Non-academic | Total |
|-----|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|
| 1 | EKSU | 53 | 144 | 197 |
| 2 | FUTA | 56 | 134 | 190 |
| 3 | UNILAG | 77 | 240 | 317 |
| - | Total | 186 | 518 | 704 |

Source: Obalade, G. (2022)

EKSU, Ekiti State University; FUTA, Federal University of Technology; UNILAG, University of Lagos; S/N, serial number.

Owing to the largeness of the population, 'Taro model' (Yamane, 1967) (Equation 1: Yamane Model) was used to derive a sample size while in delineating the sample ratio analysis was used. This sample size of 704 respondents guarantees the required degree of precision and confidence and can be said to be representative of the entire population:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N * (e)^2} \quad [\text{Eqn 1}]$$

where n = the sample size

N = total population for the study

e = the acceptable sampling error at (0.05).

The result of the ratio analysis is presented as follows:

After collecting the data, 572 of the 704 responses were usable, thus yielding a response rate of 81%.

Data collection method

This study collected quantitative data using a structured close-ended questionnaire. Three research assistants assisted with the collection of the data. The purpose and process of the data collection was well explained to the three research assistants. The data collection lasted for 6 months.

Measurement of variables

Workplace deviance measures

Workplace deviance was measured using Bennett and Robinson (2000) scale. This scale consists of two forms of deviance, namely, organisational deviance, which consists of 12 items with statements such as 'falsified a receipt to get reimbursed for more money than you spent on office expenses', and interpersonal deviance, consisting of 7 items with statements such as 'aid something hurtful to someone at work'. The respondents were asked to respond to how often they involve in each of these items at work on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 4 (never) to 1 (every time). The reason for

adopting this kind of scale is to ensure that the respondents can give their opinion on the subject matter without sitting on the fence. This is because questions asked relate to respondents' behaviour, perception and daily experiences at work hence employees cannot be neutral in their responses to questions relating to these variables. Also, this kind of scale facilitates easier interpretation (Obalade et al., 2023b). The scales reported a reliability score of 0.93.

Personality traits measures

In measuring personality traits, the HEXACO personality scale developed by Ashton and Lee (2009) was used, which includes the honesty-humility, emotionality and agreeableness (H-HEA). Each of these three traits consists of 10 items, with items such as 'If I knew that I could never get caught, I would be willing to steal a million dollars', 'If I want something from someone, I will laugh at that person's worst jokes', 'I would get a lot of pleasure from owning expensive luxury goods'. To show the level of respondents' agreement with these statements, a 4-point Likert scale was used, which ranged from 4 (strongly disagree) to 1 (strongly agree). The scales have an internal reliability of 0.82.

Organisational justice measures

Organisational justice was measured using Colquitt (2001). This scale was used to measure distributive justice, procedural justice, interpersonal justice and informational justice, which consists of 7, 4, 4 and 5 items, respectively, with questions such as 'Have you been able to express your views and feelings during those procedures?' 'Does your [reward] reflect the effort you have put into your work?' 'Has [he or she] treated you in a polite manner?' 'Has [he or she] explained the procedures thoroughly?' The respondents were asked to respond to how often they experience each of these items at work on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 4 (never) to 1 (every time). The scale reported a reliability score of 0.94.

Test of reliability and validity of the constructs

In testing the reliability of the constructs, Cronbach's alpha (CA), composite reliability (CR) and the average variance extracted (AVE) were assessed using the partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) method. The results are shown in Table 3.

The CA and CR coefficients shown in Table 3 are within the 0.7–0.9 threshold, thereby confirming the reliability of the chosen constructs. The rule of thumb for the acceptance of AVE is that it is less than CR but greater than 0.5, which also affirms the convergent validity while the rule of thumb to ensure the discriminant validity (Hair Jr et al., 2010). Furthermore, to achieve discriminant validity, the inter-construct correlation must be less than the square root of the AVE, given by the diagonal (Fornell & Lacker, 1981). These conditions are upheld in this study; hence, the constructs are both valid and reliable.

TABLE 3: Construct reliability and validity.

| S/N | Construct | CA | CR | AVE | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|-----|------------------------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1 | Organisational justice | 0.924 | 0.936 | 0.621 | 0.788 | - | - |
| 2 | Personality traits | 0.707 | 0.816 | 0.529 | 0.128 | 0.728 | - |
| 3 | Workplace deviance | 0.917 | 0.927 | 0.540 | 0.144 | 0.146 | 0.735 |

Note: Bold diagonal values represent the inter-construct correlation which is less than the square root of AVE.

CA, Cronbach's alpha; CR, composite reliability; AVE, average variance extracted; S/N, serial number.

Results and analysis

Demographic analysis

The collected demographic data of the respondents reveal the following characteristics: gender data revealed 288 male participants, 279 female participants and 2 participants who preferred not to answer, with percentages of 50.6%, 49.0% and 0.4%, respectively. The work experience data revealed that 98 participants (17.1%), 138 participants (24.1%), 175 participants (30.6%), 74 participants (12.9%) and 84 participants (15.2%) have worked for 5 years and below, 6–10 years, 11–15 years, 16–20 years and 20 years and above, respectively. The educational qualification held by the respondents ranges from school certificates with percentages of 35 (6.1%), National Diploma 74 (12.9%), HND or BSc 238 (41.6%), MSc 159 (27.8%) and PhD 66 (11.5%), respectively. Lastly, respondents' age reveals that 33 participants (5.8%), 62 participants (10.8%), 92 participants (16.1%), 134 participants (23.4%) and 251 participants (43.9%) fall between the ages of 21 years and 25 years, 26 years and 30 years, 31 years and 35 years, 36 years and 40 years, and 41 years and above, respectively.

Correlation between organisational justice, workplace deviance behaviour and personality trait

It is vital to evaluate the correlations among the consolidated variables, and the correlation results are presented in Table 4. The Pearson correlation coefficients show a negative correlation between WDB and OJ. In addition, OJ has a positive relationship with personality traits.

Moderating effect of personality traits on the relationship between organisational justice and workplace deviance behaviour

This study proposes that employees' personality traits will determine whether they will reciprocate feelings of injustice with deviant behaviour. A hypothesis was formulated to establish the moderating influence of employee personality traits on the relationship between OJ and workplace deviance. Table 5 illustrates the outcome of the statistical analysis conducted to test the moderating influence of personality traits. In the process, hypotheses 1 and 2 stated as follows are tested. The results of the PLS-SEM estimated for this purpose are also presented in Figure 1:

H1: Organisational justice is negatively related to WDB.

H2: Employee personality traits will moderate the relationship between organisational justice and WDB.

TABLE 4: Pearson correlation: Organisational justice, workplace deviance behaviour and personality trait.

| Variables | WDB | ORGJ | PTrait |
|---------------------|----------|---------|----------|
| WDB | | | |
| Pearson correlation | 1.000 | -0.105* | -0.133** |
| Sig. (two-tailed) | - | 0.013 | 0.002 |
| N | 559.000 | 558.000 | 552.000 |
| ORGJ | | | |
| Pearson correlation | -0.105* | 1.000 | 0.125** |
| Sig. (two-tailed) | 0.013 | - | 0.003 |
| N | 558.000 | 569.000 | 561.000 |
| PTrait | | | |
| Pearson correlation | -0.133** | 0.125** | 1.000 |
| Sig. (two-tailed) | 0.002 | 0.003 | - |
| N | 552.000 | 561.000 | 563.000 |
| Sig. (two-tailed) | 0.228 | 0.000 | 0.169 |
| N | 559.000 | 569.000 | 563.000 |

WDB, workplace deviance behaviour; ORGJ, organisational justice; PTrait, personality trait; Sig., significance.

*, $P \leq 0.05$; **, $P \leq 0.01$.

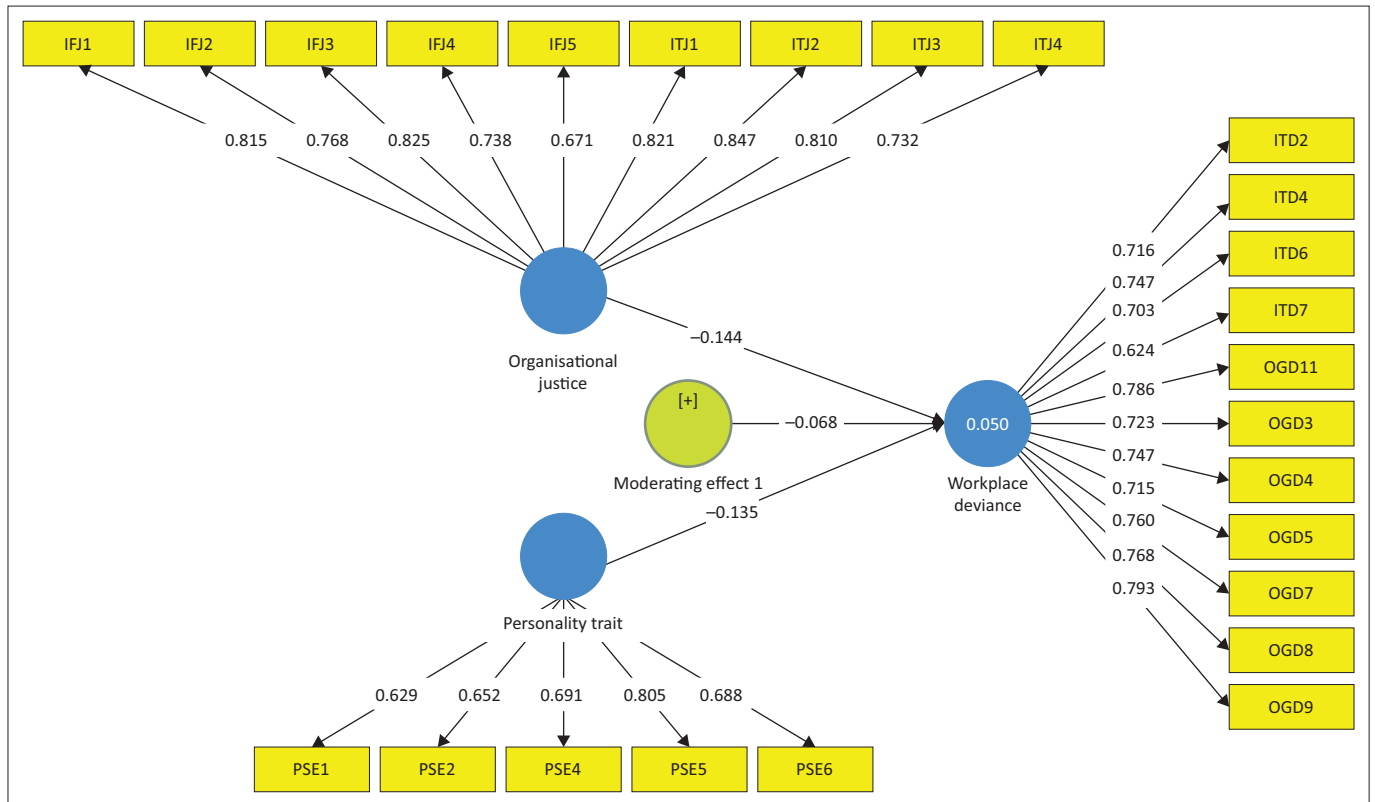
TABLE 5: Path analysis of the relationship between organisational justice and workplace deviance behaviour: Personality trait moderator.

| Variables | Coefficient | T Statistics | p |
|--|-------------|--------------|-------|
| Organisational justice -> workplace deviance | -0.14 | 3.53 | 0.000 |
| Personality trait -> workplace deviance | -0.13 | 2.77 | 0.006 |
| Moderating effect 1 -> workplace deviance | -0.07 | 1.41 | 0.159 |

To test the moderating influence of personality trait, a bootstrapping method using 1000 subsamples was employed in SmartPLS. The goodness of the structural equation model rests on the magnitude of each structural path represented by R^2 for the dependent variable (Briones-Penalver et al., 2018). Figure 1 produces an R^2 of approximately 0.05; hence, the predictive capability of the model is acceptable.

Figure 1 and Table 5 show the path from OJ to WDB ($r = -0.144$, $p < 0.01$, $n = 572$), which suggests that perceived OJ exerts a significant negative direct impact on WDB. It means that WDB reduces with an improvement in the perception of OJ. In terms of the link between personality trait and workplace deviance, Figure 1 and Table 5 show the path coefficient from personality trait to WDB ($r = -0.135$, $p < 0.01$, $n = 572$) and disclose that the impact of the formal on the latter is negative and significant. Going by the negative regression coefficient, an improvement in the personality traits (predominantly represented by A) has a significant reducing effect on the WDB at 1% level of significance. This supports H1.

Moderation analysis was performed to assess the moderating role of personality traits. This introduction of personality trait as a moderating variable does not exert a significant influence on WDB ($r = -0.068$, $p > 0.05$, $n = 572$). Thus, the study established an insignificant moderating role of personality traits on the relationship between OJ and workplace deviance. Based on Table 4, the hypothesis for the moderating effect of personality traits on OJ and workplace deviance is rejected. This suggests that personality trait does not moderate the relationship between OJ and WDB:



IFJ, Informational Justice; ITJ, Interpersonal Justice; ITD, Interpersonal Deviance; OGD, Organisational Deviance; PSE, Personality Traits Emotionality.

FIGURE 1: Interplay among organisational justice, workplace deviance behaviour and moderator, personality traits.

H2: Employee personality traits will moderate the relationship between organisational justice and WDB.

Discussion of findings on the moderating effect of HEXACO personality traits on organisational justice–WDB relationship

It has been argued that whether employees would embark on workplace deviance when they perceive injustice depends on individual personality traits. With this in mind, this study examines the moderating influence of H-HEA HEXACO domain on the justice–WDB relationship. As already established, it was found that WDB reduces with OJ and increases with injustice. Essentially, the moderating effect of E-HEXACO selected by the SEM is found to be insignificant. This finding implies that the personality traits of employees of selected public universities in Nigeria do not impact their involvement in workplace deviance in the face of injustice. Although different measures of personality are used, this finding is not consistent with Henle (2005), who found among working-class United States (US) undergraduate students that WDB would not necessarily increase with injustice provided employees are rich in impulsiveness and sociable personality, suggesting that personality moderated the justice–WDB relationship. Similarly, Khattak et al. (2019) found that neuroticism and agreeableness moderated the effect of anger on interpersonal and organisational WDB in an HR department in the Netherlands.

This study also differs from Maqsood et al. (2021), who showed that counterproductive acts of the Lahore police

officers when faced with interpersonal and informational injustice can be moderated by conscientiousness, although this trait was not studied in the current research. The meaning is that the assumption of individual or personal factors influencing reaction to injustice cannot be established in the Nigerian public university context. Simply put, staff members tend to react positively to OJ by dissociating themselves from WDBs that are harmful to co-workers and organisation, not because of their personality trait. In other words, they would react to a lack of justice by displaying behaviours that are detrimental to individuals and organisations even when they are rich in E-personality traits. Unlike the current study, Darsana and Riana (2018) also confirm the moderating role of personality. The reason for the difference in this finding could be because of the argument that personality traits may not be as stable as assumed, that is, personality traits differ across time and situation (Stangor & Walinga, 2014). Based on the current study finding, it can be inferred that the reducing effect of emotionality personality traits on workplace deviance previously established might not hold in the face of injustices. Hudson and Robert (2014) argued that individuals may change their personality traits to socially acceptable personality in the face of dissatisfaction. Hence, it could be inferred that the personality traits of employees of these selected universities did not have a significant influence on their response in the face of injustice. This may be because the general response to injustice in the society has probably influenced them to make a volitional personality change. However, this is a question for further studies.

Limitations and recommendations for future research

A cross-sectional design was used to collect data for this study. This could have affected the result of the moderation, as literature argued that personality traits differ across time and situations. The result might have improved if the data had been collected across different time points. Hence, future studies should consider adopting a longitudinal design. Also, the use of self-report is another limitation, which could lead to a common method bias; although some of the questions were reversed to reduce this bias, future studies should consider collecting data from multiple sources. Finally, demographic (such as age, experience, sex, educational qualifications) factors were not controlled in the study. Although these factors have been found to influence WDB, future studies should consider controlling for them. Despite these limitations, this study has been able to provide an understanding of the OJ, personality traits and WDB relationships in minimising the effects and costs of WDB to organisations.

Recommendations and managerial implications

The significance of this study cannot be overemphasised considering the preponderance of deviant acts in tertiary institutions and the need to address the antecedence to the act. If the deviant acts are left unattended in higher education institutions, there are financial, social and psychological costs on the institution, members and society at large. The following are some of the practical recommendations informed by the study findings: to reduce cases of organisational deviance, in the recruitment and selection processes, institutions will need to consider incorporating self-administered measures of personality traits where applicants will complete self-assessment personality traits tests, which will assist the institutions to recruit individuals who possess traits such as integrity and honesty. Recent research suggests that using technology, such as automated computers, can predict people's psychological traits based on their digital footprints, including social media profiles and posts (e.g. Facebook, Twitter or X) and credit card spending; although this can have some legal or ethical implications, such data can be significant in predicting potential employees' personality (Grunenberg et al., 2024), as long as it is sourced within the legal guidelines. This will also ensure that the institution avoids recruiting people who are predisposed to traits that can lead to deviant behaviours. Institution managers and leaders will need to set the ethical tone in their leadership behaviours and be ethical champions who encourage ethical conduct to all and lead the conversations on ethical issues. A study by Zhiwei et al. (2024) confirmed that ethical leadership behaviour can act as a trait-related context that activates employee honesty and humility, thus inhibiting the occurrence of WDB. Conducting regular employee attitude and satisfaction surveys can also assist the institution with valuable information and understanding of the root causes of deviant acts and be able to chart the way forward to ensure that such acts are minimised. Understanding the dynamics of workplace deviance and OJ is important for institutional leaders and policymakers, as it

will equip them with the knowledge needed to establish and enact policies that will minimise deviant acts within the institution. Policymakers will be able to develop a code of conduct and a disciplinary code that will ensure that all the institutional stakeholders are aware of the consequences of deviant behaviours and how consequence management will be applied to ensure order and OJ.

Conclusion

The study concludes that OJ negatively influences WDB, while individual personality traits do not influence their involvement in workplace deviance in the face of injustice. This study has contributed to the literature by examining the HEXACO personality traits, which are scarcely being examined in Nigerian literature. Also, it suggests that there is more to OJ and WDB beyond the personality traits of employees of public universities in South-West Nigeria. The study recommends that university management and government alike should ensure justice in the public universities as this helps to reduce WDB.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

G.O.O. conceptualised the article and was primarily responsible for the writing, data collection and analysis. V.M. supervised the PhD thesis where the article was extracted, reviewed and edited the article. A.M. edited and reviewed the article.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Humanities and Social Research Ethics Committee (No. HSSREC/00002245/2020). Anonymity and confidentiality of the participants was assured and they were informed that their participation in the survey was voluntary. Additionally, the participants were informed that the survey was purely for research purposes, and they signed a consent form to show that they agreed to participate in the survey.

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Data availability

Data collected for this study are available from the corresponding author, G.O.O., upon reasonable request.

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