

Effect of workplace deviance on employee job engagement in telecommunication companies in Kaduna state - Nigeria

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Abstract

Managing employee deviant behaviors at work presents managers with a number of difficulties, which has grown to be a serious issue since it can have an impact on employee job engagement. This study examined the effect of workplace deviance on employee job engagement in Kaduna State's telecommunication enterprises. This study used questionnaires to collect data from primary sources, and the statistical tool Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS SEM) was used to analyze the data. The study's findings showed that while interpersonal deviance has no impact on job engagement, organizational deviance has a negative impact on employee job engagement. The study's findings indicated that organizational work place deviance is crucial to the Telecommunication companies as it can influence how employees become engaged or disengaged in the organizations' activities. The study concludes that while interpersonal deviance may not significantly disrupt engagement levels, organizational deviance poses a substantial threat to employee productivity and organizational performance. The study recommends that the telecommunication companies should therefore pay more attention to organizational deviance than interpersonal deviance in order to enhance job engagement of the employees.

Keywords: Job Engagement, Telecommunication Companies, Workplace deviance

1. Introduction

Modern organizations are concerned about the issues pertaining to employee engagement, and the telecom industry is no exception. Researchers and management today are always looking for ways to understand what elements affect employee job engagement. One of the things that affects workers' involvement is deviant behavior in the workplace (Bagis, Arraniri, and Darmawan, 2024). Employee job engagement, which is frequently used interchangeably with "work engagement," refers to a pleasant, satisfying psychological state associated with one's employment that is marked by vigor, dedication, and absorption. It is defined as a condition when workers are

emotionally and cognitively committed to their jobs (Hendrik, Fanggidae, and Timunenu, 2021) According to Abiona, (2021), engaged workers are more likely to put in more time and effort in their work.

Managers and academics have long been concerned about workplace deviance, which is defined as intentional employee behaviors that violate significant organizational norms and jeopardize the organization's or its members' well-being, due to its negative effects on performance aspects, including engagement. From minor interpersonal transgressions to serious organizational deviance, deviant conduct can take many different forms. According to Bennett and Robinson

(2000), workplace deviation is the act of breaking important organizational rules, which is seen as endangering the organization's or its members' well-being. Furthermore, the detrimental effects of employee deviance on outcomes like employee engagement, productivity and organizational performance have drawn a lot of attention from organizational behavior academics (Rahman, Karan, and Ferdausy, 2013). Generally speaking, the results show that deviation affects group performance negatively. Hendrik, Fanggidae, and Timunenu (2021) assert that job performance and work engagement are closely related. Consequently, performance outcomes may also be negatively impacted by workplace deviations.

The results of global studies on workplace deviance such as (Rahman, Karan, & Ferdausy, 2013), in Bangladesh, Bagis, Arraniri, and Darmawan, (2024) in Indonesia, and McGuire, (2024), in United States, Utkarshi, Ravindra, and Ananta, (2019) in India, may not be applicable to Nigerian context with different economic conditions and culture. Also, most of the studies that were carried out to determine the effect of workplace deviance on other dependent variables such as employee performance, organizational performance, employee commitment, and job satisfaction like in the work of Abiona, (2021) and Bagis, Arraniri, and Darmawan, (2024) among others but this present study examine the effect of workplace deviance on Employee job involvement. Some researchers such as Bagis, Arraniri, and Darmawan, (2024), and Nura, Lawal, and Zayyanu (2024) studied the education sector.

Moreover, few studies on workplace deviance in Nigeria such as Sunday, (2013) conducted the study in the southern region in Port Harcourt, and Nura, Lawal, and Zayyanu (2024), in

Sokoto State. However, To the best of the researchers' knowledge, there is no study that has been carried out on the effect of workplace deviance on job involvement in the telecommunication companies in Kaduna State. Additionally, there is also methodological gap identified by the researcher with respect to the tools and methods of data analysis because some of the previous researchers used SPSS (Rahman, Karan, & Ferdausy, (2013), and Virtual operating system (VOS) software, Utkarshi, Ravindra, and Ananta, (2019). The primary objective of this study is to determine the effect of workplace deviance on employee job engagement in telecommunication companies in Kaduna State. This objective has led the researcher to formulate the following research hypothesis in the Null form:

H01: Interpersonal deviance has no significant effect on employees' job engagement in telecommunication companies in Kaduna state.

H02: organizational deviance has no significant effect on employees' job engagement in telecommunication companies in Kaduna state.

2. Literature Review

Concept of Workplace Deviance

Deviant conduct in the workplace is currently the subject of an increasing number of academics (Raza, Onge, & Ahmed, 2023). Workplace deviance, according to Rahman, Karan, and Ferdausy (2013), is voluntary behavior that deviates from significant organizational norms and is consequently perceived as endangering the organization's or its members' well-being. Workplace deviance is seen as a choice since employees are either driven to break the rules or lack the incentive to follow the normative standards of the social setting. Interpersonal and organizational deviance are two types of workplace

deviance (Ashraf, Shah, Shahzadi, & Ashraf, 2022).

Interpersonal Deviance

Political deviance and personal aggressiveness are the two main components of deviant behaviors that are included in interpersonal deviance. Employees that show preference for some stakeholders, like as clients, coworkers, and suppliers, at the expense of others are engaging in political deviance. Undercharging favored clients, jeopardizing business secrets, and engaging in gossip are examples of political deviance. Due to unequal service quality, discontent, and feelings of unfairness, such partiality may result in expenses for the company (Den Nieuwenboer, Kish-Gephart, Treviño, Peng & Reychav, 2023). Property deviance is the purchase or destruction of property without the consent of the company. Aggressive or hostile behavior is a component of personal aggression. The reputation of a business may suffer as a result of this type of deviant behavior. Personal aggression encompasses a range of intimidation strategies, including verbal abuse, physical threats, and sexual harassment (Ashraf, Shah, Shahzadi, & Ashraf, 2022). For the purpose of this study, interpersonal deviance can be conceptualized as employee actions that cause harm to certain coworkers or superiors.

Organizational Deviance

Production deviance and property deviance are the two main components of organizational deviance. When employees produce goods or services that don't adhere to quality and quantity standards, this is known as production deviance. Production deviance can have a serious detrimental effect on a business even when it is perceived as a little divergence. According to Kabiri, Choi, Kruis, Shadmanfaat, and Lee (2022), production deviance can take many

different forms, including intentionally working slowly, wasting resources, or setting unreasonable expectations for product performance. By stealing merchandise, fabricating expense reports, or using sales support resources on unqualified client prospects, employees may engage in property deviance. Organizational deviance was defined in this study as employee actions that directly impact the company or violate its rules and regulations.

Empirical Review

Bagis, Arraniri, and Darmawan (2024) examined the effects of workplace deviance on workers from three Indonesian Islamic universities. They used a variety of factors that can influence the likelihood of deviant behavior, such as Organizational Commitment, Workplace Spirituality, Ethical Leadership, Organizational Justice, and Job Satisfaction. The study was quantitative and used the sample quota technique as a non-random sample method. Out of the 432 respondents, 216 were included in the sample. Smart PLS was used to analyze the data. The findings indicated that Organizational Commitment and Workplace Spirituality had no significant impact on workplace deviant behavior, while Job Satisfaction and Organizational Justice had a negative but significant influence on workplace deviant behavior. Additionally, there is a slight but positive correlation between ethical leadership and workplace deviant behavior and workplace deviant behavior. Although, the research is recent (carried out in 2024), and the researchers adopted PLS, which is one of the updated and sophisticated data analysis packages, the results may not replicate the Nigerian organizations with different geographical and cultural boundaries from Indonesia. Utkarshi, Ravindra, and Ananta (2019) evaluated the empirical literature on workplace deviance that was available in

a global database. The researcher examined 736 empirical and conceptual papers on workplace deviance that were available in a global database over a 30-year period. The researcher developed a conceptual framework for workplace deviance using a Virtual Operating System (VOS) software. The study's methodology was built on secondary sources, and using the VOS software's online database of a web of science, a systematic review of workplace deviance was conducted, and a conceptual model for additional empirical research was framed. The study's findings indicate that workplace deviance is highly significant in relation to job performance, abusive supervision, work, organizational citizenship, and counterproductive behavior. The study depended solely on secondary data by carrying out empirical review to assess workplace deviance in various organizations. Empirical review is considered as a weak form analysis to be able to make general conclusions about workplace deviance around the world. Also, the qualitative approach may not give the researcher unbiased results unlike the quantitative approach that this present study employed based on statistical analysis of the study data. Also, this study was conducted in America, focusing mainly on the developed countries that may have different economic and organizational factors that may influence workplace deviance in Nigerian context. Therefore, the result may not be able to make generalization to Nigerian organizations and economy.

Rahman, Karan, and Ferdausy (2013) used convenience sampling to gather data from 201 employed MBA students who were asked to rate the deviant workplace behavior and job performance of their supervisors using self-administered questionnaires. The data were then analyzed using descriptive statistics, bivariate correlation, and regression

analysis using the SPSS Analysis Package. The study's main conclusion was that there is a negative correlation between deviant workplace behavior and job performance because the presence of deviant workplace behavior is a predicate of poor job performance. The study employed the SPSS analytical tool while this study employs a more updated and sophisticated analysis tool which is PLS SEM. The research was conducted in 2013 which is more than a decade ago compared to the year of this present study (2025). Within this time period, a lot of changes may have occurred to various organizations around the world country. The author also used job performance as the dependent variable which may have yielded different result if job engagement was used as in this present study.

Another study on the causes and effects of deviant workplace behavior was carried out by Sunday (2013). All of the study's participants are active employees of Intel Nigeria Ltd. Purposive sampling was used in the design of the study's samples. According to the results of the questionnaire distribution, 101 respondents out of 150 samples fully answered the questions, which satisfies the prerequisite for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using the 7-Likert scale. The findings showed that while deviant workplace behavior has a negative impact on employee performance, intent to quit and job dissatisfaction have a positive impact on it. Although, the study was conducted in Nigeria, it was carried out in Intel's company in Portharcourt which is the southern region of the country and the results may be different from the organizational context of telecommunication companies in north. Also, the period gap is considerably wide due to the fact that the study was carried out in the pre-pandemic (COVID 19) era, this current research would be able to fill

in the period gap by capturing the various trends in this current post-pandemic era. Finally, in the context of Sokoto State's higher education institutions, Nura, Lawal, and Zayyanu (2024) examined the relationship between workplace deviance, employee engagement, and research quality. The association between workplace deviance and research quality is mediated by employee engagement, which is additionally moderated by institutional support mechanisms, according to a moderated-mediation model that was put forth. The results of the analysis, which was carried out using Smart PLS 4, showed that workplace deviance has a negative impact on employee engagement, which in turn has a negative impact on the quality of research. According to the study, promoting employee engagement and deterring workplace deviance are essential for strengthening research results. The relationship between workplace deviance and employee engagement should be further investigated in future studies. The authors also suggested that further researchers should consider other organizational contexts apart from the educational sector. The above research gaps created by the authors have been filled by this present research as employee engagement is used as a dependent variable and not as mediator to measure the effect of workplace deviance. Also, the study that was conducted in the educational sector is now being explored to study the telecommunication sector in Kaduna state.

This study adopted the agency theory to explain the relationship between workplace deviance and employee engagement. Agency theory which was first articulated by Jensen and Meckling (1976), explains the relationship between proprietors (owners or shareholders) and agents (managers or employees) who are

employed to carry out duties on the principals' behalf. According to the theory, conflicts can occur when actors prioritize their own objectives over the organization's aims, and both parties are presumed to be self-interested. Moral hazard and opportunistic behavior are examples of agency issues that arise from this possible aim conflict. Information asymmetry between management and employees can encourage deviant workplace behaviors in organizations, particularly in telecommunications corporations, which have huge operations, and high technology dependencies. When employees perceive weak monitoring, low accountability, or unfair reward systems, they may engage in production deviance, withdrawal, or even sabotage, thereby harming the firm's goals (Robinson & Bennett, 1995; Bennett & Robinson, 2000). Agency Theory suggests that workplace deviance can be viewed as a form of agency cost resulting from employees acting in their own interest rather than in alignment with organizational objectives (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). For example, employees who feel exploited, undervalued, or inadequately rewarded may engage in deviant behaviors leading them to waste time, or misuse company resources. In telecommunication firms, where tasks are often routine and performance monitoring is imperfect, such behaviors can easily emerge if incentive and control mechanisms are weak.

3. Methodology

This study is quantitative and makes use of primary data. The population of the study include 95 employees of the four major telecommunication companies in Kaduna state including MTN, AIRTEL, GLOBACOM, and 9MOBILE. The population of the employees consisted the permanent staff that have offices

(excluding contract staff) who are more likely to be working with the facilities/properties of the organization to enable the researchers capture the level of deviant attitudes of the employees. Other criteria that guided the selection of the population of the study was to focus on employees that have worked with the organization for at least three (5) years to enable the researchers to find out how these attitudes affect their engagement, because new employees often refuse to portray their deviant behaviors until after a period of time. However, 76 respondents were sampled for the survey using the Krejcie and Morgan table. The survey adopted structured questionnaires in which 71 of the questionnaires were successfully filled and returned. The Partial Least Square, Structural Equation Modeling (PLS SEM) was employed for analyzing the data of this study.

This study utilized a 5-point Likert scale with a range of strong disagreement to strong agreement. The measurement for workplace deviance was adopted from Robinson and Bennett, (1995) while the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova, 2006) was adapted for the measurement of employee job engagement. A total of 14 items were used to measure the variables of the study. There were 8 items that were used to measure workplace deviance, 4 items for interpersonal deviance, and the other 4 items include questions measuring organizational deviance. However, job engagement was measured using 6 items in the questionnaire.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Item Loadings, VIF, AVE and Composite Reliability

VARIABLES	ITEM S	LOADING S	VIF	CRONBACH 'S ALPHA	COMPOSITE RELIABILITY	AVE
interpersonal deviance	IDV1	0.865	2.001	0.853	0.888	0.668
	IDV2	0.930	3.721			
	IDV3	0.803	3.927			
	IDV4	0.645	2.104			
job engagement	JENG 1	0.836	3.124	0.870	0.905	0.619
	JENG 2	0.955	7.113			
	JENG 3	0.879	3.131			
	JENG 4	0.681	1.983			
	JENG 5	0.694	1.652			
	JENG 6	0.623	1.513			
organizational deviance	ODV1	0.743	1.540	0.830	0.887	0.664
	ODV2	0.917	3.199			
	ODV3	0.767	1.772			

ODV4 0.821 2.196

Source: Authors, 2026 using Smart PLS 4

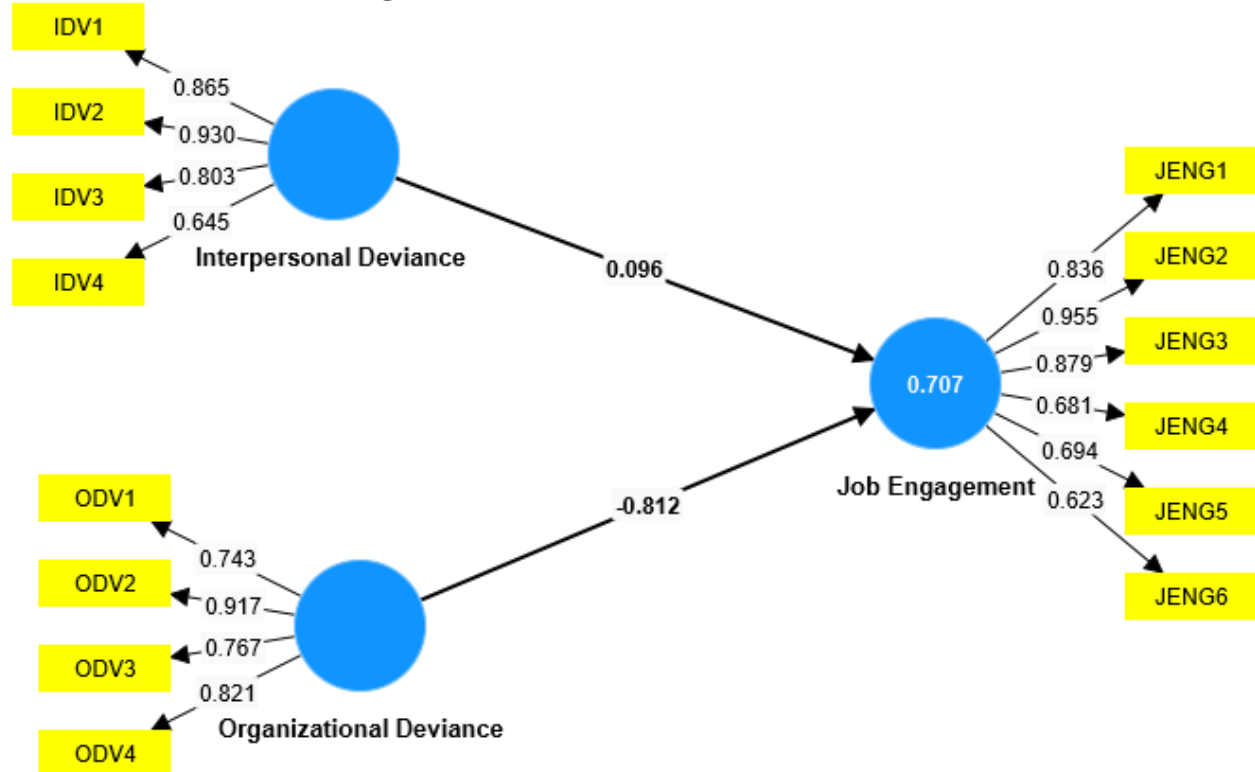


Fig. 1. Measurement model.

Table 1 and figure 1 show the Cronbach's alpha (CA), composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and factor loadings of each measurement are evaluated in order to determine the validity and reliability of the measurement model for this study. The validity of a measurement model was established because the AVE value of the three variables are loading above the required threshold of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2014). Therefore, the constructs' reliability was established without having to delete any of the items. The variance inflation factor (VIF) values of the inner and outer models were evaluated.

Multicollinearity is not a problem because the criterion requires the variance inflation factor values to be less than 5. Table 1 displays the values of the model, which shows that all items fall below that maximum value except JENG 2 which has a higher VIF value of 7.113 which is higher than 0.5. Consequently, there is no potential multicollinearity issue in the dataset. Since the AVE was achieved without the need to delete any item, no deletion was done because all items were loading above the required threshold of 0.7 according to Hair et al (2010), and between 0.4 and 0.6 according to Hair et al (2014).

Table 2: Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) - Matrix

	Interpersonal Deviance	Job Engagement	Organizational Deviance
Interpersonal Deviance			
Job Engagement	0.339		
Organizational Deviance	0.320	0.960	

Source: Authors, 2026 (Smart PLS 4)

The measurement model's discriminant validity was evaluated by additional analysis. HTMT, or the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations, was used to assess discriminant validity. When the computed HTMT values are less than 0.85, a measurement model is said to have discriminant validity (Kline, 2011). Every computed HTMT value in this investigation all constructs are less than 0.85 as shown in Tables 2 and 3. By guaranteeing that the constructs are

unique and precisely measured, this rigorous validation procedure strengthens the measurement model's robustness. As a result, the research findings' trustworthiness and dependability are greatly increased, strengthening the study's methodological rigor and offering a strong basis for additional analysis. Therefore, from table 2, construct reliability of the study was not established because the highest value is 0.96 which is slightly above 0.85.

Table 3: Fornell-Larcker criterion

	Interpersonal Deviance	Job Engagement	Organizational Deviance
Job Engagement	0.297	0.787	
Organizational Deviance	-0.246	-0.836	0.815

Source: Authors, 2026 (Smart PLS 4)

According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), The square root of the AVE should have higher value than all other constructs below it. Table 3 shows that this data set has met the criteria as no value below has

a higher value that the value above it. This indicates that no two constructs are measuring the same things, meaning that they are both distinct.

Structural model

Table 4: Path coefficients

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Interpersonal Deviance -> Job Engagement	0.096	0.101	0.085	1.129	0.259
Organizational Deviance -> Job Engagement	-0.812	-0.809	0.045	18.196	0
R2		0.707			

Source: Smart PLS 4

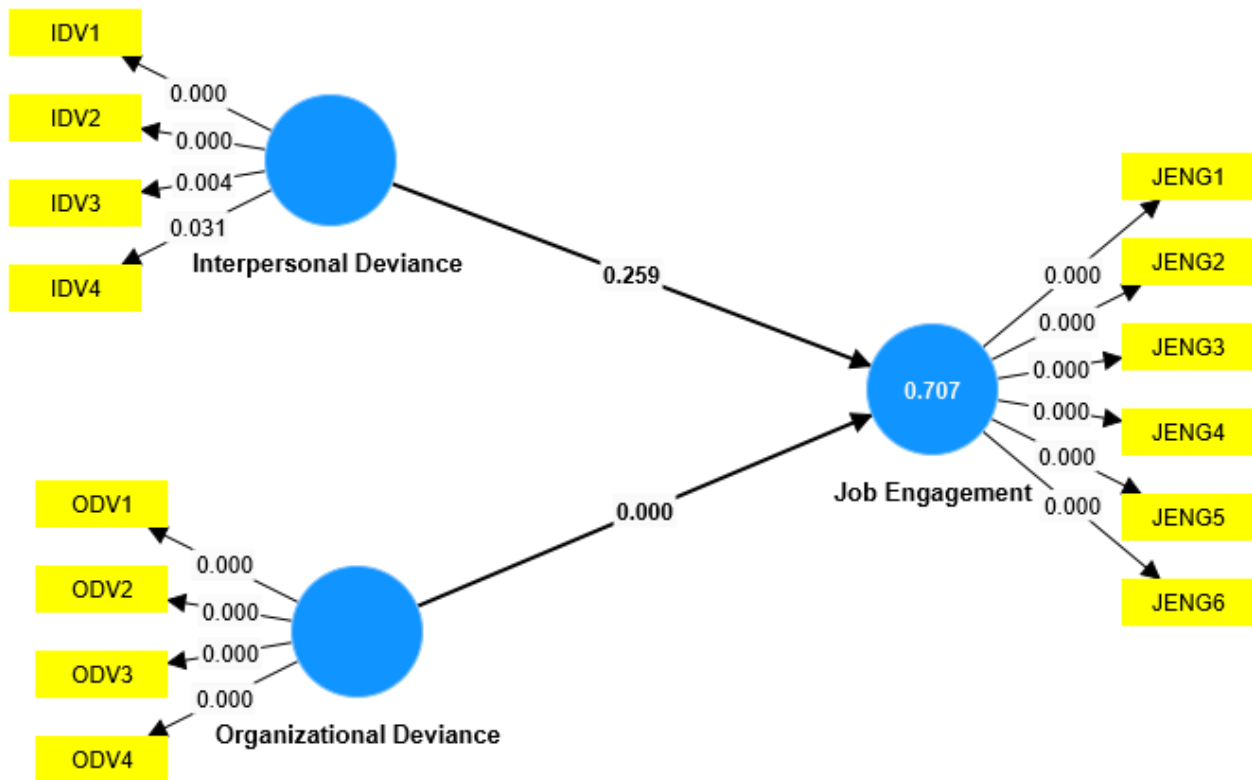


Fig. 2. Structural model

Source: Authors. 2026 (Smart PLS 4)

The correlations between the latent variables, P values, T statistic values, and the values of all path coefficients are shown in Fig. 2 and Table 4. The analysis indicates that Inter-personal Deviance IDV ($\beta= 0.096$ $p = 0.259$) has an insignificant effect on Job Engagement (JENG). On the other hand, Organizational Deviance ($\beta= -0.812$, $p = 0.000$) has a negative significant effect on Job Engagement (JENG), at 5% or 0.05 level of significance. Furthermore, the results in table 4 and figure 2 revealed that IDV and ODV collectively account for 70 % of the variance in JENG.

Discussion of Findings

This study investigates the effect of workplace deviance on job involvement of employees in telecommunication companies in Kaduna state. Based on the results of the study, the following findings are reported:

- i. Interpersonal deviance has a positive insignificant effect on job

involvement. This Implies that interpersonal deviance does not affect employee job engagement. This means that the job engagement of employees that are involved in interpersonal deviance may not be affected because there is no significant relationship between interpersonal deviance and employee engagement. According to the above finding, HO1 has been accepted.

- ii. Organizational deviance has a negative significant effect on employee job involvement. This signifies that the level at which employees are engaged with their job is negatively influenced by some of the deviant behaviors that employees do. This means that the higher the organizational deviance of employees, the lower their level of engagement with their job. The above finding has led the researcher to reject HO2. This finding is in line with Bagis, Arraniri, and Darmawan (2024) and Sunday, (2013). that show

negative effect of workplace deviance in organizations.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the study's finding that interpersonal deviance does not have a statistically significant effect on employee job engagement, the study concludes that although behaviors such as gossip, favoritism, or minor interpersonal conflicts may exist within the workplace, they do not necessarily diminish employees' psychological connection to their jobs. Employees may remain dedicated, vigorous, and absorbed in their roles despite the presence of such interpersonal issues, possibly due to coping mechanisms, organizational culture, or the nature of job responsibilities in the telecommunications sector.

In contrast, organizational deviance was found to have a strong negative and significant effect on employee job engagement. This implies that behaviors that directly violate organizational rules such as resource wastage, reduced productivity, or misuse of company assets reduce employees' level of involvement and commitment to their work. As organizational deviance increases, employee engagement correspondingly declines. This finding reinforces the argument of agency theory that misalignment between employee actions and organizational goals leads to reduced organizational effectiveness and increased agency costs.

Overall, the study concludes that organizational deviance is a critical determinant of employee job engagement in telecommunication companies in Kaduna State. While interpersonal deviance may not significantly disrupt engagement levels, organizational deviance poses a substantial threat to employee productivity and organizational performance.

Recommendations

Arising from the findings, this study recommends the followings;

- i. Although, the relationship between Inter-personal deviance and Job engagement is insignificant, management should discourage deviant behaviours that lead to inter-personal deviance but not much should be invested in training and other programs that will prevent or reduce interpersonal deviant behaviours like gossiping or harassment by their colleagues in the workplace as it does not affect job engagement of the employees in the telecommunication companies.
- ii. In order to discourage organizational deviance and improve work engagement, the telecom companies should pay more attention and make more investment on training and employee engagement programs employees. Through this, the telecom companies will be able to make the work environment more favourable for employee engagement and participation.

Suggestions for Further Studies

This study focused on the effect of workplace deviance on employee job engagement in telecommunication companies in Kaduna State. The study is narrowed to Kaduna state, other studies should be conducted to cover Nigeria as a whole. This study can also be improved through variable inclusion using a moderating or mediating variable to improve the research findings on the relationship workplace deviance and employee job engagement. Furthermore, the sector used in this study was telecommunication sector other researchers should try and capture other domains to study multiple companies or industries. In addition, one of the limitations of this study is lack of standard

sampling technique as it relied on convenient sampling to derive the sample size. However, future researchers should

adopt a sampling technique to improve the result.

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